



*Best of*  
**ASIAN EROTICA 2**

*Edited by* **RICHARD LORD**

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# Introduction

Eroticism is on the march; or maybe it's more apt to say, it's on the slink. Whatever the proper term, perhaps nowhere is that advance more evident than in Asia, which has by far the largest population of any continent. Asia practices eroticism in fascinating ways and, recently, Asian writers and writers based in Asia have been chronicling some of this eroticism.

In the second half of 2006, Monsoon Books (Singapore) published *Best of Singapore Erotica*, the first anthology of erotic fiction (along with a handful of erotic poems) ever released in Singapore. That volume proved to be a surprising success: not only did it dominate Monsoon's own bestseller list for many months, but just four months after the collection first hit the bookstores, we were going into our second edition.

Strongly encouraged by the success of this venture, Monsoon decided a few years later to come out with a second collection of erotic short fiction. This time, however, the company decided to cast its nets wider and brought out *Best of Southeast Asian Erotica*, in which four other countries were included. (The new territory included Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines.) Although it only appeared in late 2010, this book, too, seems to be a success, both critically and commercially. Now we are taking our erotic sampling out into a new frontier: the world of ebooks.

The stories included in these first two e-collections represent a mix-and-match of the best works from the two earlier print volumes. We have dropped the flash fictions and poems from our *Best of Singapore Erotica* collection

and then merged them in these first two volumes of ebooks with pieces from the *Best of Southeast Asian* collection.

As the first collection was composed entirely of Singapore stories, there is still a heavy presence of Singapore fiction in both of these first volumes. Subsequent volumes feature first-rate erotic fiction (and some non-fiction) from throughout Asia.

But what we offer here is exemplary of the principles we employed throughout in selecting stories for the first two print collections: good stories, well-written, though with a definite erotic flavour. This is not pornography; it is a sub-genre of full-bodied literature which looks at and celebrates the sensual and the sexual in the human experience. These stories were not chosen simply because they titillate (though many of them do that as well), but because they delight, inform and sometimes even enlighten and ennoble.

We enjoyed putting both collections together (as you might well imagine). We think you will enjoy reading these stories and seeing why Asia is fast becoming the world centre of eroticism in all its richness and variety.

# Good Morning, Bangkok

Andrew Penney, Thailand

Savika. As Thai as the fragrant jasmine rice used each year in the Royal Ploughing Ceremony to ensure a good harvest. But—quite unmistakably—also a daughter of Mother India; the pink and bronze tones in her complexion telegraphed her Thai-Indian ancestry in a way which stiffened the cocks of a certain kind of Thai male with thoughts of Hindu gods making love in a sea of churning milk.

The General who was admiring her contours as she slept was one of those men. Although Savika's Indian features were softened by her Thai blood, the heft of her full breasts belonged to an *apsara*, one of those curvaceous Hindu sprites decorating temples all over Southeast Asia.

In the quiet street far below the sleek new studio apartment which the General used as a *garconnière*, street hawkers were setting up their noodle carts in the pre-dawn, and steady streams of Japanese cars were already threading themselves through the Bangkok roads in a routine which was designed to beat the dreaded rush hour jams of Krung Thep, the City of Angels.

\* \* \*

It was so early in the morning that nearly every car in that thick flow of traffic had a sleeping child strapped into the back seat, an authentic Bangkok angel dreaming in his or her school uniform. The natives of Bangkok love to boast that their children eat, sleep, study, and are even born in cars; the city's traffic department has a squad of officers trained to nip through traffic jams on motorbikes and deliver babies in the gridlock.

Savika was sleeping so deeply that the General was able to use his cellphone to speak to his official driver without waking her. This was hardly surprising; the General was physically powerful, sexually experienced and was known to be a bold and demanding lover.

One of the national emblems of Thailand is the *garuda*, a fearsome and very virile male eagle which soared into Buddhist mythology via the Hindu culture that is at the root of so many things Thai. This includes the writing system, religious rituals, court etiquette, dance, music and art—even virtually every surname in the Kingdom. The Hindu God Krishna himself was said to have ridden into cosmic battles under a banner depicting this creature.

The General had swooped over—and against—Savika's supple young body like a *garuda*, taking his pleasure from the rich curves which felt so different from the smooth milky flesh of his main wife and his main concubine, who were both Sino-Thais of good birth, like himself.

He had spread her arms on the bed like wings and used his strength to press her wrists into the mattress as she moved her hips under him in that fierce Indian rhythm which they both enjoyed. The heavy breasts swelling above that narrow Indian waist had been crushed against his smooth chest during their lovemaking, and her heels had squeezed the firm muscles of his lower back when she wrapped her legs around his waist to pull him more deeply into her body.



\* \* \*

The idea of making love with a dusky Indo-Thai woman represented erotic possibilities which were something like a drug for some Thai men. Savika herself took some very sharp pleasures from satisfying the General's tastes for Indian women, who were believed to be loose and uninhibited.

The erotic appeal of such women never failed to grip these Thai males, whether they were ethnic Thais, or a *luuk jeen* like the General, whose family had emigrated from China three centuries ago and risen to the very highest levels of Thai society—as courtiers, senior army officers, and titled merchants.

Indo-Thais had lived and prospered quietly in the Kingdom for centuries. It was a small community; fewer than 70,000 souls versus something like seven million Sino-Thais.

Like the Chinese, they had become utterly Thai, producing a caste of Thai-speaking businessmen and advisers. The chief Hindu priest of Thailand, who presided over royal rites, was Indian, and at least one Indo-Thai had served as a Privy Councillor.

\* \* \*

Shortly before six in the morning, the General decided to wake his mistress for some brisk exercise before he headed for the office.

He bent his head between the thighs of the sleeping woman, and blew softly on the sensitive folds which were exposed because she was so relaxed that her thighs were slightly parted. When Savika's hips moved, her patron gripped her knees to part them even further and began to pull her out of her slumber by raking the lips of her *yoni* with his strong white teeth.

The General was fond of sleepy sex; he had a taste for watching women sleep and for taking them before they were awake enough to know whether they were ready to be penetrated by him. He loved feeling sleepy women tighten about his *lingam* in surprise as they began to realize what was happening to them.

None of his women were complaining. He knew that Savika, who happened to have the same name as a popular Indo-Thai TV actress, was particularly fond of being woken up for sex.

Yawning twice, she rubbed her eyes open and gazed at her patron, with eyes which were so large and dark that she looked like she was wearing eyeliner even without any makeup. The heavy gold dancer's anklets that she wore to feed the General's fantasies jingled lightly as he slid his lean body along hers, crushing her breasts once again, and pushed the heavy head of his very rigid *lingam* firmly past the warm, fragrant gates.

He wanted to devour his mistress; the dark and well-defined lips of her mouth became an early breakfast for him. He nipped and sucked at them and forced his tongue cleanly past her strong white teeth in exactly the way she liked, in a very deep embrace that pressed their tongues together and made his penis throb.

\* \* \*

When the General penetrated his sleepy Indo-Thai *apsara*, he entered her in a sexual position which is known as the Bevel, his body fitting snugly against hers with every slow thrust, like the smooth bevels of a picture frame or a mirror. It was a classic position which permitted the man to enter a woman from the rear while she was lying on her back.

Kneeling astride her legs, he had grasped Savika's right ankle and pulled

her leg right across her body until it was resting on his right thigh; this tilted her hips and exposed her smooth buttocks to him. He kept a firm grip on her ankle and began thrusting.

The General's young mistress gasped as she felt his *lingam* split her ripe body open and drive its thick head deep into her pussy with enough force to make the muscles of her anus clench and contract. She was dewy wet and deliciously tight. He enjoyed the low sounds which she was making as he took his time churning her hot inner sea in exactly the same way as the old Hindu gods might have churned the sea of cosmic milk with their bodies.

\* \* \*

The General's cellphone beeped twice just as Savika began writhing under him from the force of her orgasm, and her inner muscles began squeezing his cock. It was a text message from the General's official driver, who had been circling the block. The General knew what the message said, but he merely grunted and continued to make love, allowing his mistress to take her time enjoying her little death.

Like many Thai men, the General had studied Tantric sex techniques; this was a society where it was not considered shocking for men of his rank and wealth to juggle official concubines and mere mistresses, and love all of them well.

He used these techniques to control his ejaculation, withdrew from his woman and patted her on one rounded buttock; Savika's breasts were heaving and her smooth bronze skin was glowing from exertion. The mistress understood exactly what her patron wanted, and rose to a kneeling position on the bed. Tilting smoothly backwards, she arched her back like a bow to present herself to him, pillowing her head lazily on that thick glossy Indian

hair, and on the hands which she kept crossed behind her neck.

And then she waited for the General to finish. His erection was dark with blood from his excitement, and bobbing aggressively as he moved between her thighs on his knees. Savika's crotch and her mound were completely smooth, in the Indian style which her patron appreciated very much; he paused to split that smoothness with his thumbs and make her moan before he reared over her again and re-penetrated her.

Several minutes later, the General's cellphone was beeping again, more insistently now, but nobody in the bedroom of that studio apartment was paying any attention; he was too busy riding his mistress, and he was also riding an orgasm which was so intense that he left marks on Savika's upper arms and printed her shoulder and her heavy breasts with the marks of his teeth.

After he was done ploughing that darkly succulent body and had spurted a decent amount of his seed into his mistress, the General rolled onto his back next to the young woman and put his hand on her thigh to feel the deep muscles of her legs trembling from the effects of the very profound pleasures he had just inflicted upon her.

\* \* \*

The lovers lay next to each other, panting. Savika rested one delicate hand on the rough but neat hairs of the General's groin, rubbing the backs of her fingers lazily over the base of the cock which had been so very angry and hungry, but was now very tired after all that exercise.

Her patron enjoyed the light cool weight of his young *mia noi*'s hand on his penis, which was still bobbing stubbornly as it took its usual time to soften. The General knew that he would not be able to climb into his official

car any time soon; his penis had a mind of its own.

It was a full minute before Savika was composed enough to sit up and *wai* him graciously—bringing her hands as high as the middle of her forehead—and her patron had calmed down enough to greet her and wish her a pre-dawn good morning with an abbreviated but affectionate male *wai* of his own.

The young lady knew her patron well enough to bend her face down and use the tips of her fingers to touch his feet lightly, Indian-style, as if they were a husband and wife in India.

As is the case in Hindu India, touching the feet in Thailand is a very intimate gesture of submission and love, and the General's *lingam* began jerking to military attention again at her touch. Her rosy bottom, which was still completely naked, bobbed into his line of sight and sharpened his arousal.

The minor wife's Hindu curves always did that to him; he was severely tempted to flip her onto her belly and pin her down, so that he could feel her heart beating wildly as she submitted to him and waited—together with him—for him to become fully erect and take her yet again.

However, the beeps and chirps from the cellphone were becoming increasingly urgent, and the General decided, reluctantly, to wash himself and get into his dress whites for the long day of military duties ahead.

Savika watched her general languidly from the bed, without lifting a finger to help him; her eyes were half-closed under her very long eyelashes as she watched him bathe that hard body and dress himself.

She memorized the velvety heft of his penis in her hand as she bid him farewell by kissing him along the shaft. After her lover had let himself out of the tiny studio flat, she stretched herself out on the sheets like a contented oriental odalisque and dozed for a while, dreaming contentedly as another bright and muggy new day began dawning in Bangkok, the City of Angels.

**About the author:**

Andrew Penney is the pseudonym of a very vanilla 42-year-old Singaporean who writes literary erotica.

# The Sex Thing with the Tempoyak

Amir Muhammed, Malaysia

Zeb and Sarah had been having sex for nine and a half months, and she was starting to get bored. It wasn't that she would openly yawn during sex or anything, but she would find her thoughts flying to places other than the man who was actively in bed with her—such as whether she'd remembered to pay the electricity bill, as they were so quick to cut off the supply the last time.

She didn't bring up the topic in case he got offended. Besides, this was an unusually long relationship for her, so she figured that it was inevitable for the initial excitement to fade away after a while. It was probably the natural course of things. Weren't there more important things in a couple's life—mutually enriching adventures that they could embark on together? Maybe they could get season tickets for the Malaysian Philharmonic or something; she'd always vaguely wanted to cultivate an interest in classical music. So she pretended to enjoy the sex and just kept quiet—or rather, just made the unquiet sounds he would expect to hear. After all, she loved him and hoped the feeling was still mutual.

Zeb, however, was fully aware that Sarah was getting bored with him in bed. He noticed it in a certain glaze that came over her eyes, and since they always kept the lights on during sex, he would get to see every little thing

in those eyes that he loved so much. He didn't bring up the topic because he didn't want her to get defensive, which might trigger their first fight. It was an unusually long relationship for him, too, but he wanted to make it even longer. So he continued performing his sexual duties the best he could, while thinking of a plan to make things better.

\* \* \*

One night in December, he suddenly thought of something. It was an idea that seemed to him quite fine, and so he started grinning. Luckily, Sarah was already asleep by then, so she didn't have to wonder at this sudden, unexplained cheer.

Twenty-four hours later—after they'd both been to work and back separately, as was their usual weekday routine, the only difference being that this time Zeb had made an extra stop along the way home at a dusty bookshop named Toko Junk—they found themselves in bed again.

They were in the middle of foreplay, and without looking up at her face, he could sense (at the most subliminal level) that her enthusiasm was less than his. He suddenly stopped what he was doing. She noticed the change in the usual rhythm and opened her eyes. He was no longer in bed, but standing beside it.

'What's the matter?' she asked, hitching herself up.

'Wait till you see this,' he said, and walked to a large paper bag that he'd left on the dresser. He removed something from the bag and walked back, joining her in bed. She accepted the thing; it was a hardcover book, exquisitely bound in burgundy and obviously old, but written in a script that she didn't understand.

'It's an ancient Javanese sex manual,' he explained.



‘It doesn’t look Japanese.’

‘No, JaVAnese,’ he corrected her. ‘Luckily, it’s a language I can read. It’s called the *Serat Centhini* and it’s from the early 19th century. It’s sometimes referred to as the Southeast Asian *Kama Sutra* because it’s so sexually explicit. During the course of the story—and yes, unlike the *Kama Sutra*, there is actually a strong narrative—there are many lessons on how men and women can best pleasure each other, because sexual ecstasy is seen as something that can help people attain spiritual enlightenment.’

‘I don’t believe you.’

‘You can Google it; the book exists!’

‘No, I mean I don’t believe you can read it. Who on earth reads ancient Javanese?’

‘I learned it from my grandfather. Look, I’ll prove it to you,’ he said, and he lay back against a raised pillow, getting her to do the same against the other one. The pillows, nice and big, were from IKEA.

He put his right arm around her shoulder while his left hand flicked open the musty tome at a random early page. He started reading aloud. The words sounded incantatory, even frightening, as if he were putting a curse on her. She half-expected the room to start filling up with *kemenyan* incense. He read out a whole page, the fingers of his left hand travelling down the book while those of his right hand, almost unconsciously, touched various parts of her. When he was done, he had a slight frown.

‘It’s very strange,’ he said. ‘I’m not sure I get it.’

‘Why, what is it?’ she asked, getting curious in spite of herself.

‘It’s describing an esoteric sex ritual involving *tempoyak*.’

‘*Tempoyak*?’

‘Yes, *tempoyak*.’

‘I didn’t know the ancient Javanese ate fermented durian.’

‘This isn’t exactly for eating.’ And then he described in some detail (he was translating a whole page, after all) how the *tempoyak* should be used. She was incredulous, then amused, then intrigued—but still rather mystified.

‘But why would that be pleasurable? It doesn’t seem logical,’ she said, after the ritual had been described so vividly she felt like a 3-D demonstration had taken place in front of her, like a triple-X version of *Avatar*.

‘Don’t know. Maybe it was true in the early 19th century but no longer so now.’ He wanted to put the book away, but she stopped him. His right hand continued to touch parts of her, and now she placed his left hand, which still held the book, over some other parts of her. As the exquisite burgundy binding of the hardcover travelled over her skin, she thought of the possibilities.

\* \* \*

The next day, as per their usual weekday routine, they took their separate routes to work. She ended up lunching with three of her colleagues at a Malay restaurant. The place was packed, and the whirring fans didn’t do much for the humidity, but the food was good. While she had a little *sambal petai* with her rice and *tenggiri* fish, she also asked to take away a Tupperware of *tempoyak*.

‘You actually like that stuff? It’s so sour,’ her colleague Mel said.

‘Yeah, I know,’ Sarah said, vaguely. She reached for her phone to call Zeb and was dismayed to see that the battery had run out. She could wait to use the charger in the office, of course, but she felt an urgency within her. She asked to borrow Mel’s phone.

She dialled Zeb’s number from memory, and he took his time answering.

Sarah knew she had to keep her part of the conversation discreet because her three colleagues were within hearing distance. She didn't want to seem like some kind of pervert.

'It's me. Borrowed phone. I bought the *tempoyak*,' she said, when he was finally on the other end. 'Should we try the ... recipe tonight?'

He laughed. 'Serious?'

'Yes' she said, keeping her voice light. 'I'm curious to see how it will taste.'

'Okay, but there are a few other items we'll need to get. The tools.'

'Yes, I remember the items. Can we get modern-day equivalents? Some of those ancient ones won't be available now.'

'I will check with IKEA after work,' he said, and she could almost see him wink.

After the call ended, her other colleague, Rini, said, 'Waah, I didn't know you two cooked.'

'There's a first time for everything. It's a Japa— ... Javanese recipe.'

'Those things tend to be spicy, right?' asked her third colleague, Ling.

'We shall see,' was all Sarah said.

\* \* \*

As promised, he had a bag of IKEA products. They spent a bit of time preparing in the kitchen, and when everything seemed to be in place, he asked, 'Are you ready?' and she replied, 'Sure!'

They did it in the kitchen itself because there were already paper towels and power sockets there. And it was, in a word, awesome. She tingled in places she didn't even know existed; at a precise moment during the ritual, she actually thought her head would swivel around like in a movie possession,

because she really felt like she was being taken outside herself, into a more primitive but more vital realm of the senses. Perhaps she was taken out of the Earth into the mythical sky kingdom of Kayangan.

When it was finally over, she wanted to start all over again. He was willing, but there was no *tempoyak* left. When they both stopped panting, he said, ‘Tomorrow you can bring a bigger Tupperware.’

That was the start of the most amazing week of her life. She couldn’t concentrate at work. The simplest things, such as watching creamer dissolve in coffee, would make her blush with remembered pleasure. It was like everything else became black-and-white while the sex thing with the *tempoyak* every night was not only in colour, but the swirling, explosive palette of a Bollywood musical sequence. (Why deny it: she’d always preferred Bollywood to classical music. The Malaysian Philharmonic could safely be ignored now.)

She was sure that the sounds they made would sometimes alarm the neighbours, some of whom were terribly nosy, but she didn’t care. Couldn’t a couple resuscitate Javanese rituals from the early 19th century in the comfort of their own kitchen—or, as was the case, in every other part of their apartment?

*Things can’t get any better than this*, she thought. But she was wrong.

\* \* \*

She got back one evening and started undressing immediately. She somehow knew he was in the bedroom. (Since they’d started the sex thing with the *tempoyak*, they had achieved an almost ESP level of communication. They could not only finish each other’s sentences but anticipate the other’s thoughts. This was probably because the ritual took them into more intimate

territory than either had thought possible.)

By the time she got to the bedroom, she was already naked. And he was waiting for her, standing, also wearing only a smile. He didn't have any of the props with him, but even looking at him without the ritualistic paraphernalia—he was just the naked Zeb that she had seen hundreds of times in the past nine and a half months—was enough to get her excited.

She was so happy letting her eyes wander over every inch of him (some inches more than others) that she didn't notice he had his right hand behind his back. Then he brought it out: the book, again.

'I've just finished the next page,' he said. 'The page after the description of the sex thing with the *tempoyak*. Would you be interested to try the next level?'

'There is a next level?'

'Yes. The book goes through several stages, each subsequent one meant to bring a couple even closer together in the journey of life.'

She nodded, not daring herself to say anything, not even 'Sure!', even though her mind was filled with exclamation marks.

'Tonight we can go back to basics: just you and me, if that's okay with you. But when you come home tomorrow,' he said, walking towards her, reaching her, doing a few things to her until he brought his lips to her ear and whispered, 'bring a whole durian.'

\* \* \*

A few days later, Zeb was walking along the road that housed the Toko Junk bookshop. The aged proprietor, sitting outside for a respite from the stuffy interior, waved to him and he stopped.

'How are you doing, Mrs Heng?'

‘Fine, thank you. Looking for any more books?’

‘Not for the moment,’ he said cheerfully. ‘There are so many I haven’t finished yet!’

She watched him retreating back with a smile. If only all customers were like him! He’d sometimes buy things that no one else would buy. Like his most recent purchase: a 19th-century Land Code, a hardcover exquisitely bound in burgundy but written entirely in Hindi. ‘Do you read Hindi?’ she’d asked.

‘No.’ She could have sworn he then winked at her. ‘But I’ll improvise.’

#### **About the author:**

Amir Muhammad is a Malaysian writer, publisher and filmmaker. He has been writing for the print media since the age of 14. Two of his documentaries are banned in Malaysia. His books include *120 Malay Movies* (Matahari Books) and *Rojak* (ZI Publications), both published in 2010. *The Sex Thing with the Tempoyak* was first published in *Rojak* (Petalang Jaya: ZI Publications, 2010).

# Night Ride

Nigel Hogge, Philippines

The gears of the old diesel engine clashed and the bus lumbered off up the highway, bumping over potholes and creaking from side to side. Lisa fought her way to the rear to see if she could get a last fond look at her mother and sisters, but when she got there, the gathering dusk made it impossible to see anything through the grimy rear window.

For some reason she began to cry. Perhaps it was a memory of her father averting his eyes as he accepted the little gift from her that started the tears. She searched for tissue paper in her purse, all that she carried besides an overnight bag and some ears of corn bound with twine, pressed upon her by her mother at the bus stop.

A hand loomed in front of her face, holding a handkerchief. Instinctively, she took it and wiped her eyes. Pulling herself together, she removed the cloth from her face and was disturbed to see it wasn't very clean.

She turned to the person who had so kindly offered it to her and was surprised to see a young foreigner, a tall, skinny white guy dressed in a faded denim jacket, scruffy white T-shirt and khaki shorts. He was grinning at her. In the darkness, she could make out faint pockmarks on his face. He had a big, thick-lipped mouth that reminded her of an English rock-and-roll star she'd seen cavorting on a video.

She quickly returned the grubby cloth, nodded curtly, and turned back to the window. She was in no mood for banter. She felt depressed and stared through the glass at the occasional passing light.

The bus droned on through the evening. Night fell. Her feet ached. She hung onto the ceiling strap for support, and out of nowhere her depression lifted, and wicked, erotic thoughts came to her, the kind of thoughts that often plagued her because she was, she knew, a wicked and erotic girl.

Wild fantasies entered her mind, not helped by the fact that she was standing on a filthy floor which trembled and vibrated and sent tremors running up her legs, finishing up at the same damp spot between her luscious, plump, quivering thighs.

Naughty visions of men, boys, hairy chests, flat bellies, hard biceps, lean buttocks, swelling calf muscles, corded necks, thick wrists, sensitive fingers, firm jaws, the feel of a man's ... *caramba*!!

She froze, her cheek pressed to the unclean glass ... *caramba*! The son of a bitch! The low-down animal! Was she imagining this, or was this part of a dream? Had she fallen asleep standing, and what she felt pressed against her bottom just imagination?

She unwrapped the green leaves from a sheath of ripe yellow corn and wondered if she shouldn't offer some to the foreigner standing behind her. He had been silent so far, thank the Lord, and she couldn't be sure whether he was very kind or a disgusting pervert. She decided to keep the rest of the corn to give to her girlfriends at the club, and sank her pearly white teeth into the soft, delicious flesh of ... *caramba*!

Placed against her butt, which she knew from experience was one of her most sought-after features, was a warm iron pipe. Yes, right in the groove between her bottom cheeks! She chewed on the corn furiously.

She couldn't scream for help with her mouth full. She twisted her head



around to glare at the white guy, but he was standing with his eyes closed, a peaceful, innocent expression painted on his face, which was definitely not handsome. The warm iron pipe had withdrawn. It no longer pushed against her soft rump. She stared up at the man for a while. It was too dark to see if he was pretending to be dozing. A car passed the bus and the cabin was momentarily lit, the yellow glare of the passing headlights sweeping across the mass of long-suffering humanity squeezed like cattle inside the bus as it rattled through the hot night towards the capital.

She blinked and was startled to see his eyes, which were a deep brown with flecks of gold, now open and looking at her.

They didn't turn away. The man watched her, no longer grinning like an idiot. He wasn't quite as unattractive as she had first thought. She frowned at him and turned back to her solitary vigil at the greasy window. She knew what would happen next ... and it did.

Actually, two things happened at the same time. She had just realized that her pussy was very wet because of the nasty thoughts she'd been unable to banish from her mind minutes earlier, when the bus hit a particularly large pothole on the highway and the foreigner was thrown against her back. A growl of irritation rose from the passengers, and some of the peasants near the front of the bus told the driver their opinions of his ancestry and his mother's true occupation, but what Lisa knew with total clarity was that the iron pipe against her rump was real, very real, and had not been a dream.

The man groaned, inches from the back of her head, and what did little Miss Catholic Country Girl do? What did prim and proper Miss Irritation do? She pressed her bottom back against his penis, is what she did.

To this day, when she thought about that moment, which was often, she could hardly suppress a smile. It was a delicious moment. The fire in her belly churned, the torment between her legs itched so much that she had to

twist herself against the side of the bus.

She dropped the corn husk and her purse and raised her hand to the strap above her, the better to display herself for the foreigner's pleasure. Standing on tip-toes, her calf muscles taut, she firmly, without a hint of shame, hidden by the noisy darkness, moved her *derriere* against his dick and began rubbing herself up and down like a mare in heat cajoling a stallion, for in heat she was.

She was wearing a red blouse made of silky material and although it was demure in style, with long sleeves and a big collar, she could actually look down and see her nipples pushing through the fabric. She placed a hand on her left breast and teased the stiff, thrusting peak of her nipple, playing with it, pinching, tweaking the small living cone, then, moving her fingers to the other breast, repeated the torment.

Her breath was rapid, further fogging the glass inches in front of her mouth. The hefty meat of the stranger's prick gave off such a heat as to warm her bottom. The two of them, existing in their sensual zone of privacy amongst this mass of flesh around them ... a zone made all the more thrilling because of its proximity to danger and discovery ... began to move in time with the bus's lurching motion.

His hands, unable to restrain themselves, left the strap and used her shoulders, and then her waist, for support. He leaned into her, and her bottom clenched and unclenched as his turgid love club, so fearfully constrained by the cloth of his khaki pants, pushed against her black skirt and silk panties, layers of material it was desperate to break through. Suddenly, the bus swerved off the highway and bumped down a short track to pull up, with a groan of brakes and a sigh from the ancient transmission, at a dimly lit way-station.

The bus stopped and the passengers pushed and jostled towards the

door, which had swung open with a bang. Within seconds, they were alone on the vehicle, save for the baskets of vegetables and fruits, the slatted crates of chickens and a few pigs tethered by their hind legs.

She leaned down to pick up her purse, fighting to control her pumping breath, conscious of the soggy sweetness between her inner thighs, hardly able to turn from the window and escape her torturer. But turn she did, and fled, unable to make eye contact with the man, so shy did she now feel.

She climbed down the steps shakily and walked towards a soft drink stand. She didn't know how long she stood staring at the rows of bottles, back-lit by the flickering oil lamps of the tiny cafe. People milled about as night moths flew around her head and around the soft, hissing glow of the lamps. She was lost in a personal trance, the feel of the man's mighty cock alive in her memory. She forced herself to drink a bottle of sugary soda. She paid for it with trembling hands and entered the forest behind the cafe to take a pee before returning to the bus.

As she strolled back to the dusty vehicle, she saw the man leaning against a tree. In front of him he held a big suitcase. She guessed he might have travelled a long way. What route had he taken that fate had planted him so near to her on this night? Where was he coming from? Where was he going? She smiled at him timidly, but his eyes were averted. She knew the suitcase was held in front of him to conceal the bulge in his shorts.

The driver of the bus shouted and clapped his hands. They were on their way again, ready for the final hour's drive through Manaha's morbid outskirts and from there to the center of the city, and she had a decision to make.

Would she, could she, return to the back of the bus to take up her former position by the window? Would he follow her? Should she stand, this time, at the front of the vehicle to escape him? Was she a slut or was she a decent

*Verubian whore on the way back to peddle herself once more along the dangerous waterfront of the capital?* Was she losing her mind?

She sprang onto the bus near the head of the line of passengers and strode back to her original place. A small smile was upon her lips. So she was a slut after all. So be it. She could hardly wait for the man. She knew with the female's carnal intuition that he would soon be behind her again. She knew his need, and needed that need.

She knew he was there as the bus thumped and jolted back to the highway, stopped, changed gears with a hydraulic hiss, and swung to the left to begin its final lap of the night. Her dark, pretty eyes lit up with an inner fire as once again his manhood pressed against her jouncing young bottom cheeks.

But this time the playing was over. She had signalled her permission. She had, in effect, surrendered any rights she might have as a young girl travelling alone in the night, a citizen of this country, a human being going about legal business. No, that was gone.

His strong hands pulled the black hem of her skirt up and took the elastic band of her panties and slipped them down. She gasped and wriggled. One of her hands dropped from the strap to curl behind her and place itself on the marvellous length of his dagger, and the feel of it was breathtaking.

The man was wasting no more time, an urgency was upon him, a grim need, as his hand took her wrist and assisted her in unbuttoning the buttons of his military type shorts with their safari pockets.

The buttons were swiftly opened and his weapon, smooth and helmeted, truly a warrior in the night, thick and veined, fell from his pants, jerking and twitching into her hand. She whimpered and turned and was lifted onto his suitcase, which was kicked under her by his booted foot, and she was now face to face with the enemy and her arms went around his sweet bony body.

She felt his ribs through the T-shirt and put her hands under the shirt to feel his muscular lean back, her hands hidden under the denim jacket ... Oh, Jesus, he felt so good, his skin was like a baby's, but so hot.

He was burning as she opened her legs like a shameless hussy, eager to be entered. His lips brushed her forehead and his fingers swept the black hair from her sparkling eyes.

She gazed with love, yes love, into his face, searching every wonderful imperfection of his features, her mouth hungry for the taste of his lips and tongue and ... dear God ... the helmet of his naked baton touched the soft hair of her snatch ... the man was going to fuck her! Not *here* ... please not now ... we'll be caught, she thought, her mind a turmoil. We'll be *seen*.

The bus will stop, people will shout and point, the police will arrive and lock them up like animals in a cage, her picture will be in the papers, her mother, her sisters ... no, worse, her poor *father* ... will see her stupid face plastered over every journal in the land. She'd be a laughing stock, totally notorious like one of those starlets she liked to read about and criticize ...

This was the end, she had to escape, she just *had* to, and ... it felt good, so good, as the length of his cock slipped one inch into her open, pulsating love lips. She stood on his suitcase, eyes glazed, lips wet, and eased slowly onto his cock.

She felt the ramrod enter her straight and in command. She was but its subject, its slave, two inches, three inches, and more, please free me from this pleasure, and suddenly he was all the way in, who knew how many inches now, and she felt the bigness and tightness, and felt she might die. It was too big, was she to be slaughtered by this animal, this white bastard was going to kill her, and then she began to pump with him, for him, around him, tightening her wicked quim, stroking his back, biting his mouth till she tasted salty blood, kissing him so she couldn't scream, her heart pounding as her

orgasm came to her without warning.

Her round bottom, naked and squeezed and probed by the man's rough hands, was whipping back and forth as her orgasm grew and spread like molten lava through the pit of her belly. She felt her juice flow down the slippery sides of her secret place, she moaned in ecstasy and passed out for many seconds.

She didn't know and would never know how long she fainted because the bliss was so surreal, the delicious pain of it so maddening that she lost consciousness, and the man held her up, supported her with his wiry arms, one hand on her bare bottom, the other around her waist as spasm after spasm now hit *him*.

His froth flowed into her in creamy streaks, and because of their upright position and the laws of gravity, began to drip from her honey pot, overflowing from her forest of want, and streaks of it fell between their legs to land in drops onto the suitcase.

In their frenzied orbit of lust, she had stiffened at the feel of his hot come, her eyes rolling back to show the whites, and they hadn't realized that the bus had stopped at a red light and was stuck in a traffic jam.

The interior of the bus was now bathed in patches of moving light, for they had entered the city. Their frantic coupling must end and the cruelty of having their pleasure so abruptly taken from them was acute, but his dong, sodden and still huge, slipped out of her while the walls of her pussy tried to hold and clutch the big guy on its way out, pathetically attempting to prevent its escape.

But all men's cocks eventually must leave that sweet wound between the female's legs ... oh, would that they could remain in the moist, sumptuous havens of pussies forever, never having to face the harsh world again.

But such a mean trick had been played, so the young buck withdrew

from Lisa, pulled his whanger out and wiped it with the same dank cloth he had earlier offered to dry her weeping eyes. He released her. She stepped off the suitcase, pulled up her panties, pushed down her skirt, and tugged her red blouse together where the buttons had been torn off. Rivulets of perspiration coursed down her face. They stood there, dazed. The rest of the journey passed quickly.

The bus stopped at the main terminal on Avenue De La Paz. They waited until the other passengers had alighted. Several of the country folk who had travelled with them gave the couple curious looks. Was it possible their ardor had been less furtive than they had presumed? It hardly mattered now. No one had raised an alarm. They calmly stepped from the bus and wandered onto the wide avenue, which was quiet at this time of night, save for the occasional passing vehicle. A light rain fell, creating haloes of light around the well-spaced street lamps. They stood on the sidewalk holding hands.

#### **About the author:**

Nigel Hogge, born on the Isle of Wight in 1942, has worked as a fisherman and miner in Australia, a manager of a copra plantation in New Guinea, a tourist guide in Hong Kong, an English teacher in Tokyo, a bartender in Los Angeles, a seaman on a Swedish cargo vessel and a sales representative in Korea and Vietnam. He has been the 'voice' on over 250 radio and TV commercials in Manila and Tokyo, a character actor in more than 15 movies, he has written and sold four movie scripts, and he now lives on his 57-foot cabin cruiser in the southern Philippines. *Max in Waiting* is excerpted from the novel *Lucifer Rising* (Charleston: BookSurge, 2003).

# Clean Sex

Ricky Low, Singapore

Hey, Jeff, what's the matter? Why don't you just get a maid in here, clean things up, lah. You can afford it now, man!"

Oh, please. Whenever my friends—or wannabe friends—have suggested this, I have just sighed deeply, raised my eyebrows in a cynical arch, and slipped into my above-it-all smirk—a look that says, “You so don’t understand what it’s all about.” It’s a look I picked up while studying at Stanford. They’ve really perfected that dismissive look over there. I can’t claim that I’ve mastered it quite as well as they do it, but I’m not at all bad.

While studying over there, I also learned the importance of self-reliance. For example, no real guy lets someone else do stupid household chores for him. Even when you get married, you work out a system, you share those duties. That’s what being a full, responsible adult in today’s world means: sharing all those stupid things that just have to be done. Having a maid is clearly a symptom of some weak strands in your moral fibre, as I have always lectured my lazy friends back here.

I’ve never told them the full story of why I feel so uneasy about having a maid. Some of it is that I am still embarrassed that my first erotic episodes involved the maid my family had when I was a boy. But there’s more to it than that.



\* \* \*

Like all fairly comfortable Singapore families, my parents engaged a maid soon after I was born. Actually, they engaged a few maids, but it was the third one who stands out in my memory: Hazniya. She joined us when I was about nine. She was the most energetic of the maids and, if I remember correctly, the only one you could even charitably call attractive. Like the other two, she came from Indonesia, had an enticing coffee-with-light-cream complexion and truly captivating eyes. She also had a prodigious set of boobs, the kind that assured she would never need to worry about drowning.

I guess I was always attracted to Hazniya, though at first it was just that kind of little-boy, prepubescent crush. As innocent as a plate of overcooked oatmeal with pools of skim milk. The sex part didn't seep in until I was about twelve. As is also typical of many middle-class Singapore families, Hazniya was often assigned the task of bathing me. I mean, like standing over me while I did a cursory job of swabbing myself in the tub, then telling me to stand up while she finished the job, making sure that I got all the "hard-to-reach" places.

Hazniya had been doing this from time to time, starting from when she first joined us, but one evening, when I was twelve, it all changed, changed utterly. I had already started thinking how really stupid it was having a maid bathe me at my age and was being sort of deliberately peevish as I washed myself down in the tub. Then Haz asked me sweetly to stand up, she wanted to see how I was doing. I groaned and made a face, of course, but that was the deal.

As I stood up, Hazniya bent over. I'm sure there was no intent behind it, but on that day, she was wearing this very low-cut shirt and a bra which

formed more of a suggestion than a support. As she started wiping my arms and my chest, I was fixated on those munificent breasts, now a glistening coffee-gold from the light sweat the bathroom heat had worked up. I wanted to lean over and take them in my hands, rub them, kiss them, lick them, see if they tasted like the toffee my uncle often brought me from Scotland—or maybe the coffee ice cream I loved. They were, after all, roughly the same colour as those two treats.

And then it happened, suddenly, without any prodding from me, I swear: I popped the first erection of my whole life. At least, the first one I can remember having. This was a shock to me, and I mean a terrifying shock. I didn't even know what it meant, except that it clearly had something to do with Hazniya, and her bathing me, and that it had made this strange transformation in tribute to her. I stood frozen for a few seconds, and it seemed to get even stiffer as she continued twirling soapy concentric circles across my chest with the washrag. Then she happened to glance down and notice my boner.

I was appalled, hollowed out with shame. I wanted to say something, come up with some excuse, but I suddenly went dumb. While I was still choking on some words to spit out into this frightening situation, Hazniya got there first. “Oh, my, my, what have we here? Our little man has suddenly become a really big man, hasn't he?” She then gave me that warm smile that had sparked my puppy love for her. But the whole situation had changed radically. I yearned to grab her, to squeeze those fantastic breasts against me, to rub my new-found power tool right up against them. I wanted her to take off all her clothes, right there, then join me in the tub. I wanted her.

Of course, I couldn't deal with this at all, being just a spoiled twelve-year-old kid. I mean, this was my maid, dammit, who just two minutes ago was bathing me like I was a little boy. So my lust was instantly converted

into anger. I scooped up two handfuls of water from the tub and splashed them fiercely across her face and breasts. I wanted her to look shocked, then enraged, to slap me maybe. She did none of that. “Get out! Get out of here! Right now!” I screamed at the top of my high-pitched voice.

And she, damn her, maintained her usual good spirits—she just smiled and said, “Oh yes, let me get out; I think Jeffrey is big enough now to take care of himself. Oh yes, I see this clearly.”

As she made her way out the door, I shouted a phrase I had learned the year before in school and was just waiting for the right opportunity to use in social discourse: “Fucking bitch!”

I underscored the bitterness of that curse by hurling the washrag at the door she had just closed behind her. I then sank back into the tub and started crying, crying like an eight-year-old. I looked down and saw that my cock had just about returned to its normal shape and size. I felt ... saved. But just as soon as that happened, I started thinking of Hazniya and those gorgeous tits and the damn thing started stiffening on me again. “Hazniya, you bitch!” I shouted out into the ceiling, hurt and anger intertwined in my timbre. I then reached down under the soapy surface of the water and gingerly touched the thing. I gently rubbed it a few times, as if to console it, to say it wasn’t its fault that it had caused me so much embarrassment. “You bitch, you bitch, you bitch,” I whispered as I consoled myself a little more.

Luckily, my parents were out that evening, so they caught none of my little outburst. Hazniya and I said nothing about it the next morning, or ever again. We pretended like the whole thing had never really happened. Of course, I never again let her near the bathroom while I was bathing—or even combing my hair, for that matter. She stayed with us for another six months and then was suddenly gone. She disappeared one week when I was off visiting an aunt and uncle in Hong Kong.

When I asked what happened, my mother shook her head sadly and told me that Hazniya had to leave abruptly because of some family crisis back in Indonesia. A couple of years later, my Dad confided that they had dismissed her because she had “taken some things that didn’t belong to her.” And some time after that, a close family friend told me he’d heard the real reason was that Hazniya got caught having sex on the living room couch with some guy while my folks were supposedly away. But I’ve often asked myself whether our little episode in the bathtub had anything to do with that sudden departure.

Whatever it was, we never engaged another maid after Hazniya left us. Physically left us, I should say. Her memory stayed with me for the next few years. During the high-tide period of my masturbatory youth, I would invoke images of Hazniya whenever I wanked off: those warm smiles, the bubbly laughter, the wonderful eyes, those fantastic tits. The fact that I had never really viewed those tits in their entirety only made them that much more fantastic in my wank-off reveries. Of course, the fact that she was a maid, a live-in servant meant to meet most of our daily needs, only exalted my fantasies about her. It would take me years to grow ashamed of those fantasies and the exploitative relationship that underscored them.

\* \* \*

That shame happened when I was at university. Political correctness ruled supreme at my school, and it was especially dominant in the Sociology Department. From my professor, Kander, and those plodding leftist texts he foisted on us, I learned what an exploitative system was embodied in the whole maid-and-master nexus. This was especially true when the maids were plucked from nearby, “less-privileged” societies—as Hazniya had been. Of

course, all my classmates and friends at the uni subscribed to this view one hundred per cent plus. So I never volunteered the fact that my own family had kept maids from the Third World when I was a kid. I only confessed it to my closest friends there at the uni, and then only as a sign of how much I had grown during my short time at Stanford.

When I returned to Singapore with my nice, crisp MBA tucked under my arm, I fancied myself a completely transformed person, one damn enlightened guy equally well versed in business and life in general. I was also vehemently committed to self-reliance by then. Anything I couldn't do for myself just wouldn't get done. Period.

Of course, an MBA from an elite American school guaranteed that I could just about waltz right into any high-paying job and find a stack of perks to perk me up. Then, two months after I started working, I started looking for a place of my own.

The complex that I moved into, the Chateau de Luxus, was optimal in many ways. It was right across from a big bus terminal, about an eight-minute walk from an MRT station, another short walk from a huge shopping centre, and it was populated by swarms of attractive young women. Admittedly, some of them had husbands or kids in tow, but a lot of them seemed to be single. The problem was, most of these women seemed to be staunchly single.

Watching them go off to work in the morning, or come back in the evening, or head off on weekend activities was an exercise in slow torture. Here were these luscious babes, with expertly coiffed hair, long, exposed limbs, fall-on-your-knees figures, and yet they all bore a demeanour that screeched, "Keep your distance, dude!"

This was cold beauty in its purest, coldest form. I finally started thinking of them as just lovely works of art brought in to jack up the Chateau's property values. Actually embracing one, I thought, would be like fondling a priceless

statue or scratching on a painting in some museum.

Fortunately, this permafrost demeanour was only common among the sleek, polished women of my own class, mainly Chinese Singaporeans like myself. There was one group of attractive young women at the Chateau who were anything but cold; in fact, these ladies grew warmer and warmer after a few casual meetings and then regularly greeted me with a giggly friendliness. And in contrast to the cold, stiff beauty of the career women, these girls exuded an earthy sensuality that filled the air when you passed by them. I'm talking here about the maids.

Not only did the maids always return my greetings, before long they would initiate them, even move into casual conversation when the situation allowed. Which usually meant when their employers were not around. With the employers there, they'd revert to shy, conspiratorial smiles.

And I have to admit, I found many of these maids cute, some of them very cute. More importantly, for my tastes anyway, they were alluring in a thoroughly unpretentious way. Unlike the Chateau's career ladies, these "domestic workers" were not shrewdly wrapped in the latest expensive fashions with a heavy measure of makeup fine-tuning their features. These maids were more down-to-earth—more real, to put it plainly. No makeup I could detect. And their standard uniform consisted of short pants which only made their way down the top third of their thighs topped by tight tee-shirts or breezy blouses. Simple, straight to the point. Which, in my view, made these ladies much more sensual and alluring than the pampered lovelies of my class and race. If the latter were cold works of art, the maids were rich folk art made flesh.

\* \* \*

I always exchanged greetings with the various maids I ran across, and there were a lot to run across in my complex. I sometimes got the impression I might be the only one without one. At the beginning, I convinced myself that my socializing with the maids was a byproduct of my liberal education: I wasn't going to treat them as mere servants or act like they were invisible because they weren't off in active pursuit of the five Cs.

But after awhile, I realised that it was not just my democratic instincts at work. I was actually pretty interested, sexually, in some of them. Just seeing them approach, I started to get horny. And finally, I had to admit to myself what should have been obvious: some of the appeal sprang from the fact that several reminded me very much of Hasniya. In about the second month at my new home, I started to imagine the unthinkable: having a little sexual dalliance with some of the maids. Okay, I imagined it a lot; I spun it in my head several times a day.

\* \* \*

Actually, it was one maid in particular that sparked my fantasies—Liana. Liana, what a great name, a sweet blend of Mediterranean mellow and sultry Sulawesi swing. She had—and you'll soon learn that I had sufficient opportunity to observe—these lovely dark eyes, accentuated by thick, sensual brows. Her lips were full, dreamy, moist, with a pronounced tendency to spill into a smile. Her breasts were ... well, I'll get to that part later. Suffice it to say she had a fucktastic compact figure that cried out for closer inspection. Except that there was, of course, no chance to carry out this inspection anywhere in the common areas of our condo complex.

And this wasn't just a one-sided infatuation either. Liana had, right from the start, been the most forward of all the maids. She obviously had her eye

on me. “I never see you with your wife, Sir. Does she spending all her time with the children? Or is it her job?” I told her I wasn’t married. Her smile seemed to brighten up about 100 watts when she heard that. “Oh. Well then, Sir must have many girlfriends then. So handsome, and with that beautiful car.” So, she’d noticed my wheels. Good, that’s what they were there for, right? And while handsome might be stretching it a few categories, I am sort of cute ... in a subtle way.

“Well, no steady girlfriend at the moment. I’m sort of keeping my options open.” This phrase seemed to puzzle her, so I swung back to straightforward. “No, I don’t have any regular girlfriend at the moment. Still looking for the right lady.” Again, that smile lit up like a fireworks display.

“Oh,” she’d say, “I think Sir is just being modest.”

Unfortunately, Sir was not being at all modest. While I had dated a number of women over the half year I’d been back, I hadn’t had sex—well, you know, real live sex—since returning from the states. And six months without sex, that is not good for one’s health or one’s self-esteem. What good was all my independence really doing me? When I moved in, I thought it would be great: no sneaking a woman past Mom and Dad to get her to my bedroom. But not a single lovely had come anywhere near that waiting sanctuary.

However, Liana and I grew more and more friendly as the weeks went by. The challenge was how to get her back to my place. Fortunately, this was less of a problem than it would have been with many of the other maids. Unlike most of the domestics prowling the Chateau, Liana did not have any high-energy kids to look after. Or bathe, I reminded myself with relief. She took care of some frail old woman who apparently lived alone in the complex. Well, not really alone, of course, Liana was there with her most of the time.

Her actual employers, I came to learn, were the old woman’s son and



daughter-in-law. They had their own condo over in the East Annexe of the complex. They would drop by quickly in the evening to look in on Mom, and occasionally swing by on the weekends to take the old lady and Liana off for some excursion.

The son always had this loose, distracted look about him. When we'd run into each other and say hello, he'd flash an embarrassed smile that looked more like a wince. Then he'd shrug, like he wished he could have given more to that smile, but had lost it somewhere along the way.

The daughter-in-law was going to be my real hurdle, the way I saw it. She was this perpetually wound-up bitch, who eyed me suspiciously whenever I crossed her path. Okay, she probably eyed everyone she came across suspiciously, she was that type. But I personalised it, as I tend to do with these things. Behind it all, I suspected that she might just be very insightful and could somehow sense how much I wanted to get my hands on Mom's curvaceous caregiver.

But like I said, distracted Sonny and the Wicked Bitch of the East only dropped by for a quick peek each evening and were absent the rest of the time. That meant the only one between me and luscious Liana was the old lady. I didn't see her causing any problem either, because this particular auntie was apparently not terribly aware of what was going on around her. In fact, after a short time, Liana and I would flirt along the pathway or in the lift with the auntie right there, just staring out into space, evidently oblivious to my presence—or at least my intentions. Even better, the auntie tended to nod off for long periods during the day, which allowed Liana to slip out quickly and do personal errands or schmooze with her maid friends. Now I just needed the opportunity to make some arrangements with Liana herself.

Early one evening, we ran into each other at the shopping centre. “Is Sir buying something?” she asked, blithely ignoring the half-full shopping basket that I was lugging.

“Yah, I had to pick up a few things I need before the weekend.” We happened to be standing near the checkout counter at that point. A blush tinged her dark cheeks as she glanced over at one of the displays there, then turned back quickly, her eyes cast down towards the floor.

“Sir will probably have to buy some packages of those things for his weekend, I think.” I turned to see what she was referring to. The first thing I saw was what she must have seen: the condom display. A rather ample condom display actually. I was stunned, though clearly not in any unpleasant way. I just couldn’t ...

When I looked back at Liana, she had just peeked up at me, a delectably impish smile on her face. Wondering what the fuck to say, I stammered out “I ... I think I have enough of those already.” I swallowed deeply. The next thing I said could carry me to either bliss or disaster. I had to be very clever, very polished. “You going back to the Chateau right after this?”

Don’t smirk; it was clever enough. Liana flashed another of her bountiful smiles and said she had to pay first, holding up two cans of sugar cane juice. I pointed out that paying would be advisable, then told her to put them in my basket and I’d pay for everything. We could settle up later, I added.

We then joined the queue, with Liana standing right behind me. It was like some guy shopping with his maid, I thought. Then I realised I wasn’t at all unhappy with that. If anyone saw us, they’d never think I was about to hit on a maid from my complex. They’d think we were just ... hey, another maid and her well-heeled employer. But I suddenly decided I didn’t care what they thought. What business did they have thinking about us anyway? To hell with

them, right?

As we strolled back to the Chateau, I asked Liana if she had any boyfriends here in Singapore. She told me the guys here did not seem to like her. I told her I found that extremely hard to believe. She just smiled sweetly, as if she didn't believe it herself. I then asked if she had any boyfriends back in Sulawesi. She had a few, she told me, but they weren't serious. "Just a bunch of stupid boys," she said. "Stupid, stupid, stupid."

By this time, I was finding it a little hard to walk since I was grappling with an erection that was caught in my boxers, jutting out sideways. This was no big handicap, though, as Liana herself was not able to move too quickly in her tattered flip-flops. Thanks to these two restraints, the stroll back was long and leisurely. We laughed and giggled a lot, though I can't for the life of me remember what we were laughing about. As we waited for the green light just across from the Chateau, I decided to make my move. I asked her if she'd like to come down to my apartment sometime soon, maybe have some tea and cookies. She said she preferred the sugar cane juice. I told her I was friends with a major supplier. She asked when she should come. I asked when she could come.

We arranged for her to come over early Saturday afternoon. "Sir" and "Ma'am" were going off to visit friends in Malaysia this weekend, and she said she could drop in when her auntie had her naptime. "Great. Oh, we should spend some time together over at my place," I added.

"No problem," she promised. "My auntie usually takes a long nap in the middle of the day." I really liked the way she said "lo-ong." My cock somehow managed to stiffen even more as it found another nook at the side of my boxers to snuggle into. I could barely move. But for Liana and me, it just remained to work out the logistics.

She had told me that her auntie usually dozed off right after lunch. That

should be about a quarter past one, she thought. But it was almost three by the time she finally arrived. I was going crazy by then, scanning some of the DVDs I'd pulled out to try to distract myself while waiting for her. But it was worth the wait. When she finally stood there in the doorway, she was just so hopelessly lovely. She had done something special with her hair and even put on a bit of lipstick. As much as I loved her natural look, she was even more alluring with this little touchup. I had a hard-on within seconds.

I offered her some sugar cane juice. She said she would love some. Then she shyly asked if I could add some alcohol to it. "Sure," I answered, "no problem." I reached into the back of my cupboard for a bottle of vodka.

She scooped up the glass, then downed the whole thing in one long swallow. "Sorry," she said, "I was so thirsty."

"Nothing to apologise for," I replied, then asked if she wanted a refill.

She nodded, but added, "Just half a glass." While I was still pouring, she turned and glanced at the kitchen floor. "Oh," she sort of squeaked. "You really need your floor cleaned."

"Oh yeah, but it's alright," I replied. "I ... I always leave it until Sunday. I look forward to doing it right after morning coffee and the *Sunday Times*."

I doubt she even heard me. She looked around quickly and then, as if guided by some preternatural instinct all Indonesian girls born to be maids have, headed for the cabinet under the sink where I keep what few cleanup items I have. She enthusiastically hauled out a rarely used bucket, a scrubbing brush, a couple of rags and some liquid that I guess you use to clean floors. She was amazing; I don't think I could have found those things so quickly.

"It's alright, it's alright," I said.

"Oh no, Sir, this floor really needs a good clean."

"Just leave it," I barked. "I'll ... I'll take care of it later so you can get a good sleep tonight. I promise."

Liana had moved to the kitchen sink and was running hot water into the bucket. “No, this is good, so. I really like cleaning floors. It’s so much fun.”

While I moped, she mopped. And then things got more interesting. “I hope you don’t mind, Sir. But it always gets so hot when I do this work.” Before I could ask her what I was supposed to not mind, she had swiftly tugged off her tight-fitting tee and with one further, deft movement removed the bra as well. She stood there with those luscious coffee-toned breasts topped by dark nipples and a kid’s-party smile spread all over her face. She looked down briefly, as if to check what had me so transfixed, then looked back up, her smile conveying a sense of total understanding and agreement. She then swivelled and flipped the bra and tee onto the kitchen table with all the grace and artfulness of a stripper.

Oh my God, she was a fucking work of art under that maid’s attire. Her skin was soft, light brown, the shade of coffee just the way I love it. Probably just as sweet, too, I was thinking. Although Liana was of small stature, her tits were fantastic: not as large as I imagine Hazniya’s were, but sizeable and perfectly sculpted. I wanted to clutch them in my palms and moved towards her with every intention of doing so.

Holy wake up, I couldn’t stand it. I had such a massive hard-on, I thought it might choke me. I figured if I couldn’t put it into her, and very soon, I’d probably start ramming myself against a wall until I collapsed from exhaustion and multiple abrasions.

But she seemed obsessed with getting that damn floor clean. Desperate to plunge myself into this lady, I moved to the very edge of the soapy circle and reached out for her. But she pushed me off. With a poised smile and a no-no shake of her head, she said, “Not yet, Sir Jeffrey. I have to start scrubbing first.”

Then she said something else that made me crazy. “Oh,” she said, “I

wore my very special panties today, you know.” She unhooked her shorts and opened them to show me the knickers: a splashy swirl of bright colours. They looked like they’d been designed by someone whose usual job was turning out ice kacang. “I always wear them for special days. But I don’t want them to get wet. Would you mind it if I ...?”

I guess she took my tongue hanging down over my chin as the closest I could get to “No, I don’t mind!” because within a few seconds she had pulled off both shorts and pants, then carried them over to the kitchen table too. And, wah, could she sashay that perfect little tush as she made the journey. As great as her tits were, I’m ready to concede the ass may have even topped it. I couldn’t believe this was really happening to me. And then she turned around again, and I saw her pussy fully for the first time. Oh God. It was a beautiful crop of dark, wiry hair, as lovely, dark and deep as the Indonesian rain forest.

I felt like lunging over there, grabbing her and then carrying her off to the bedroom, like Tarzan bringing Jane to his boudoir in the trees. But I thought that might spook her, ruin the whole moment. No, I had to practice a little patience. At this point, however, my patience had an expected shelf life of about five seconds.

She was now down on her knees with a wet rag in her hand, but before she began scrubbing, she looked up and flashed me another quick smile. She then commenced with the cleaning. She swabbed the rag against the floor in small circles, her ass and tits rotating in syncopated rhythms to this entrancing motion. She seemed so concentrated as she applied delicate pressure to those circles she was making on the tiles.

I suddenly noticed that I was unconsciously making similar strokes with my right hand across my groin. I started to sputter out a plea—or maybe it was a confession of love. “Liana, I ... the thing is, why I really wanted you to come down here today ...”

She looked up to listen, then flashed the most knowing smile I'd ever seen and spun my life around. "Oh, this is such hard work. I don't think I can do it all myself. Don't you want to help me, Sir?"

"Help you? You mean ...?" Without dimming her smile one click, she nodded towards the floor, with its sodden field of white-capped mounds. I tore off my clothes as quickly as I could; I tossed them back into the other room with the rest of my stuff, then rushed over to Liana and the bucket, sliding along the last stretch of the slick surface on my knees.

She handed me a rag and together we started working on the tiles. After a few moments, I started gently rubbing the rag along her ass. She gave a soft purring sound at this. I started to move the rag up the small of her back, making small concentric circles as I moved. Meanwhile, she had started rubbing my chest with her rag, gently rotating it the way Hazniya did when I was a kid. She put the rag down and used her finger to wipe behind my ears. I was in high ecstasy.

But that was just the prelude. As my rag was making its way up around her shoulders, she put both her hands on mine. "Now we come to the best part of cleaning floors," she said. And then she gave me a gentle kiss, as sweet as any kiss I can remember.

She pushed her rag a short distance behind her, took the other rag from me, then retrieved the third from the soapy depths of the bucket. She turned and laid all three out along the floor. After making sure they were all set at the right distance and fluffed up properly, she laid down across them, like they were some makeshift bed. She raised her legs in V-shapes, then stretched out her arms and drew me down on top of her. As I was sliding a little on the wet tiles, I was a bit clumsy about getting in just the right position. But I managed to get more or less right while Liana stretched out her hand, stroked my cock gently, then guided me into herself.

I was so horny by now, I almost came within seconds of entering her. But Liana somehow arched her hips rather acrobatically, thrusting my cock into a new position that held off ejaculation. I looked down into her lovely face in surprise and admiration. Any thoughts I had had that she might be an innocent short on useful experience completely disappeared.

Her pussy felt fantastic, especially in the position she now had me wedged into. It was moist and warm and wonderfully tight, and we felt like a perfect fit together. If anything, I was the innocent here. I whispered that I thought this would be even better in the bedroom.

At this, she just giggled warmly. "But we have to get your floor cleaned first. This is how we get to all the hard-to-reach places." Aha! Those "hard-to-reach places." I wondered if that was a phrase they learned at Indonesian maid school.

I was also wondering if she knew what she was talking about when she started pushing with her feet, propelling both of us along the floor. We would glide along the slick, sudsy surface, twisting slightly, her pussy rubbing my cock deliciously, my cock deftly stroking her pussy. Although I was on top of her physically, she was clearly on top of the situation, directing our slippery voyage along the floor, or the rubbing together and thrusting of our respective pleasure packs.

After a short time, I discovered how I could direct our movements a little myself, using my knees to get short, thrusting jerks, then giving a push along the floor with my toes, sending us sliding along a few feet, still locked together.

A couple of times, she would say she'd missed a spot. And then she'd start sliding back, her hands and ass rowing us backwards. She would again start to move her luscious ass from side to side, then raise her hips slightly and swivel. I'd go crazy. So would she. She'd moan, "Oh yes, I think we got



it this time, that hard-to-get spot,” and then give out that little syncopated squeal of hers that I found such a turn-on. So I would answer, “Let me give it some thorough rubbing, to make sure we’ve really got it clean this time.” And then I’d thrust myself down into her lovingly, again and again.

We moved all around the kitchen, shaking the table, knocking over a couple of chairs. A few times—yeah, I think it was three, but I like to believe it could have been four or five—Liana would suddenly sail us along a wall or into a corner. She’d be pinned there and suddenly thrust her hips back and forth energetically, reaching orgasm after about ten seconds. She’d clutch me by my neck, maybe pull my hair and moan in the most wonderful way, then slip into a mode of release with a deep smile. On the last corner stop, I joined in, my cock going at about five throbs a second, my semen flowing into her in full, rich jerks. We lay there on the floor for maybe another few minutes, wiped out and absolutely ecstatic. This, I realised, is what sex was supposed to be when they first came up with the idea.

After, like I say, a few minutes of still lying there locked together, Liana looked up at me with a slightly sad expression and said she had to hurry back upstairs to look after her auntie. I nodded just as sadly, and said I’d help her get ready.

Ironically after all that sloshing around in soap and water, we both needed to take a shower. Which we did together, of course. We also washed our hair, which was drenched in streams of detergent suds. Afterwards, as Liana dried her luscious body with a towel, I started to get at her hair with the hair dryer. When she finished with that great bod, she dropped the towel and took the hair dryer from me to finish the job. At one point, I took the dryer back from her, switched it to cool, and pointed it towards her pubic hair. After a few rounds with the dryer, I reached down, said, “Let me check that it’s really dry there,” and started stroking the bush. By this time, I myself

was already as hard as a graphite rod, and I started to gently insert my middle finger up inside her. “The hair’s fine,” I noted, “but I think this is a little wet here.” She nudged me back gently and tsked.

“Oh, Sir Jeffrey is very much horny today. But I have to get back to my auntie or I might get in really trouble. We’ll be back to check on the floor in a few days, though.”

\* \* \*

For the next two months, my kitchen floor was kept stunningly clean. Liana and I would attend to it at least once a week, sometimes even two or three times, depending on how often she could sneak out of her place and down to mine. It sparkled, that floor. I never realised the happiness I could feel just having such a sparkling floor to look at.

Usually, we’d proceed the way we had the first time, but sometimes Liana would ask if she could get on top. I would agree immediately; I learned while at business school how important it is that both parties be able to see things from the other person’s position.

I must admit that lying on those soppy rags was not the most comfortable of positions, but it was more than a fair trade-off for experiencing Liana’s additional skills and seeing the ecstasy she could achieve from above. She’d mount me gently, then start pumping, sort of navigating our course around the floor. The best part of this arrangement was being able to look at her gorgeous tits as they dangled in my face. Okay, I’m probably biased, but they were absolutely beautiful with their warm, light brown tone highlighted by the thick, almost purplish nipples.

From below, I could reach up and take her breasts into my wet, sudsy palms, massaging them gently as she pumped her groin energetically on my

cock. I'd start at the bottom, just stroking them with a pair of knuckles from both hands, then spread to full palms, taking the breasts first from the sides, then working my way to the top, then back down again.

Then I'd press my thumbs against her stiffened nipples, twirling them about while the rest of my fingers stroked the top half of her breasts. While this was going on, Liana would go crazy, pumping wildly and bringing herself to one, two and who-can-count-any-more orgasms. Her long, almost weeping squeal of rapture was the most fantastic thing I'd ever heard, and I'd often just grab her ass and join her in the rapture, sweeping into screaming orgasms.

The only problem with her up above was that a few times, we'd get so caught up in the heat of passion that she'd lower her tits right to my face. Instinctively, I'd raise my head a bit and start sucking on those gorgeous melons—only to get a rich, soapy taste filling my mouth. I'd then start choking and spitting out what I'd just sucked in and we'd have to separate and take a little breather until I recovered.

After her first couple of visits, I started giving her little presents every time she came down to clean. At first, they were fairly simple—some new sexy underwear, a box of chocolates—just small tokens of my appreciation. Before long, they got more elaborate—jewellery, a nice bag, designer underwear (none of which looked like ice kacang). As my little presents became more and more generous, Liana grew even more zealous in her cleaning. Sometimes the two of us would do the floor two or three times at one go, making it immaculate. Then she'd jump up, say she was late, rush in and shower, pull her clothes back on, give me a hurried kiss goodbye and rush out.

And, God, was she sweet. Often, just as we'd finished, while I was still lying on top of her, she'd look up and ask, "Are you really happy here with

me, Sir Jeffrey?” And I would say yes, really. And then she’d lay her head back into a pool of blue foam and say, “Me too. I am so really happy. Really.”

Towards the end of those two fabulous months, I made a major decision. I decided that I was going to make this thing permanent. I wanted to go up to Liana’s employers and ask if we could make some deal whereby I could purchase her employment contract off them. I wanted her to be my maid full-time. Did not want to share her with anyone, not even some doddering old lady. But I didn’t move immediately on this urge. I wanted to give it some time, maybe two weeks, mull it over, make sure I was making the right decision. That was my mistake, one of the biggest of my life. Before that two weeks was out, so was Liana—out of Singapore.

\* \* \*

She didn’t come as scheduled one day, and I was puzzled, well, a bit pissed-off actually. I tried without success to get in touch with her over the next few days and when I couldn’t, I grew quite concerned. I tracked down some of her maid friends around the Chateau and asked if she was sick or something. No, they told me; she’d been sent back to Indonesia by her employers. Ma’am had apparently found some expensive items stashed in her room: earrings, bracelets, necklaces. The bitch accused Liana of having stolen them from somewhere. Liana insisted that they weren’t stolen, they were presents. “Presents? From who?” asked Ma’am. Liana said they were from her boyfriend and admitted she had a boyfriend she snuck off and saw sometimes.

“Did she, uhh, ever say who this boyfriend was?” I asked. Her friends shrugged. Some guy from the construction site down the hill, they guessed, a Thai or a Bangladeshi. That’s what she told her employers anyway. Of

course, this merely confirmed for the couple that Liana was lying, that she had obviously stolen those articles; no foreign construction worker could ever in his wildest dreams have afforded such presents.

The friends went on to tell me that before they repatriated Liana, the couple had confiscated all of her fancy presents. They told the poor girl that since she wouldn't tell them the truth of where they came from, they were going to donate the gifts to some suitable charity. (Probably the dour bitch's Office Show-off Charity, I muttered to myself.)

One of the friends had managed to go to the airport with Liana when she was flown back. The poor thing had cried the whole time while waiting to board, according to this friend. She also kept insisting, over and over again, that she really had this boyfriend, really: a real, true boyfriend, kind and generous, cute even, the kind she had always dreamed about meeting. And then she did, and he had become her *real* boyfriend.

At this, I could only nod and choke out a few words. "Yeah, I believe her. I think she definitely had a real boyfriend. A girl as pretty and sweet as that, she could have had anyone she wanted. Really." I then thanked them for their help, said I had some things I had to attend to urgently, turned and rushed off. When I got back inside my apartment, I slammed my fist against the wall. And there was something harsh and stinging in my eyes for awhile.

\* \* \*

Needless to say, my kitchen floor has never been so clean again. And I have never once since then known such pure, uncluttered happiness. Really.

**About the author:**

Ricky Low is torn between the real world where great amounts of money are passed around, some of which can come to you for simply being in the right place at the right time, and the world of the creative artist where you engage in the most fulfilling activities you are capable of. Ricky has written scads of journalism, mainly about cuisine, art and literature, and a small amount of fiction. He most prizes his fiction work, and regards *Clean Sex* as his best piece of fiction to date. He plans to write more fiction in the future. Keep watching these pages.

# The Service Provider

John Burdett, Thailand

Penny would never have described herself as a lady of the night, and, since she was white, British, and never walked the streets, neither would anyone else. In her heart, though, she admitted that for quite some time she had lived off men who would not have paid her expenses if she had not rendered a reasonable performance in bed.

She felt no guilt or degradation, only a mild anger. Not toward men. If anything, it was feminism she blamed for her situation. She adhered to the outdated female archetype who, in past times, settled down with a big-hearted man who forgave incompetence in housekeeping, cooking and the acquisition of money in return for an infinite tolerance combined with an unlimited affection for him and their children. In her dreams, she saw herself in a big untidy house with a big untidy garden (probably Bloomsbury between the wars: she had a fondness for history), a husband with a comfortable beer gut and scruffy kids who chased each other around the house and loved her. But in the twenty-first century, the chances of meeting any guy with a decent income who was not stressed out of his brain were as remote as winning the lottery.

So, in the way of the English today, she lived for vacations. Through hints and prods, she had induced all of her last five boyfriends to take

her on holiday, three times to the Med and twice to Morocco. The ending never changed. She would give him a great time, and through subtle female techniques ensure that he relax, let go, share his heart. She would assure him she was not looking for a marriage that would enable her to grab half his assets. Once he was suitably mellow, she would even allow herself to start to love him. Then the vacation would finish, they would fly back to London and within twenty-four hours he was a stressed-out, insufferable maniac all over again.

The last one had differed only in that she had seen failure coming. It had been her first time in Greece and, despite the excessive tourism, the islands had seduced her like nowhere else. She told him she didn't want to go back. She just couldn't face London anymore. She was sorry. He seemed to understand. He even financed her for a couple of months and flew out for a weekend, which she made sure was as dirty as could be—pulled out all the stops, so to speak, rolled, licked, sucked and humped the nights away until she felt as if she'd worked out in a gym; but they both knew it was the end of the affair. Keeping a mistress on a Greek island was almost as financially ruinous as marriage itself

So she hung out first on Crete, then on Mykonos, then on Lesbos for a few months until money started to get really tight. She became almost blatant about her pickups, made it clear that although no way was she on the game she was rather short of the readies *if you know what I mean, love ...* And so made her way slowly west.

She knew that in Gibraltar there were Brits with dough who worked there. It seemed ideal, and only twelve miles from Morocco, where she had had a great holiday with number ... Well, she'd stopped counting, but it had been a great vacation.

She was disappointed. The Brits on the Rock were of the yobbish,



loutish sort, many of them army or ex-army. Only by chance she made a contact who got her invited to a party given by a man from South London who was a prince of offshore gambling. It was a big, loud party in a big loud mansion in Sotto Grande, which is where rich Gibraltarians invariably live.

The host had little conversation and less manners, but he introduced her to Mike. Mike had no conversation at all and probably no manners—it was hard to say, he was so intense about an Internet game he'd invented that was earning him millions, something to do with dropping virtual balls into virtual boxes. He probably figured he didn't need any social graces. If she hadn't been desperate, she would have slapped him, his come-on was so crude. But at the same time, she could see he was honest, as the emotionally retarded can be. He really did think that people were basically computers and would do what you wanted if you clicked on the right spot. He guessed—it wasn't difficult considering how worn her best jeans and T-shirt were—that in her case he only needed to click on *dough*.

From the party mansion, it was only a short walk to his mansion, but he drove her in his Porsche. She knew the first night was a test; if she performed right, he would be quite generous. So, feeling like a real whore for the first time in her life, she pulled out all the stops. Next morning, he offered her a contract and left her, open-mouthed, to think about it while he drove over to Gib to make another million.

Sitting in the great big kitchen of the great big mansion, she felt suicidal. Had she really come to this? Out of sarcasm she wrote down the deal he had offered her in his snappy, take-it-or-leave-it, barrow-boy voice before he'd dashed out of the house without even a peck on the cheek.

She was not of the self-destructive kind, though, and knew very well there was a price to pay for everything. Considering how she'd pretty much sold her body for peanuts up to now, it wasn't really such a bad deal. Once

she accepted the no-frills attitude, she realized he was being quite generous. She had trained as a legal secretary, but had proved unable to endure the tedium. Now she translated his hurried, staccato offer into legalese:

Between

Penelope Smith ('the Service Provider') of the first part  
and Michael James Hope ('the Client') of the second part,  
it is hereby agreed as follows:

*1. The Service Provider will satisfy on demand any request of a sexual nature made by the Client at anytime of the day or night on receipt of not less than fifteen minutes notice provided that:*

*a. such request shall not cause pain, injury or risk of health to the Service Provider. (In this context, bondage and/or mild flagellation which does not break the skin shall not be considered painful or injurious to health; but the Service Provider shall have the right to refuse anal intercourse at her discretion.)*

*b. For the avoidance of doubt, it is specifically agreed that the Service Provider will participate in group sex at the Client's request, provided that said group sex shall not include other men or more than two other women per session.*

*2. In return for the services set out in 1 above ('the Services'), the Client shall:*

*a. Pay the Service Provider five hundred pounds per week;*

*b. Provide accommodation at the Client's mansion in Sotto Grande free of charge, including a bedroom for the Service Provider's exclusive use;*

*c. Pay all reasonable living expenses of the Service Provider, including appropriate clothing and food, and provide a car for the Service Provider's exclusive use.*

*d. Purchase health insurance for the Service Provider.*

*For the avoidance of doubt and protection against disease, the Service Provider shall not engage in sexual activity with any person, male or female, other than the Client for the duration of the contract. It is explicitly agreed that the Service Provider will not entertain any person at the Client's home address, male or female, will not make noise or in any way disturb the Client's peace and quiet which he requires for his work, will not complain in any way about the Client's behaviour, manners, living habits, snoring, masturbation, taste in music, drinking, use of recreational drugs, involvement with other women, or, generally, assume in any way, manner or form the rights or privileges of a wife.*

*3. Either party may terminate this Agreement by providing seven days notice to the other party.*

*Signed:*

*Penelope Smith (Service Provider)*

*Michael James Hope (Client)*

When he dashed in again that night, he said, 'Still here then?'

She showed him what she had written, expecting a laugh, or a snigger, or at least some sign of humour. Instead he nodded, took out a pen and signed. When he gave her the pen, she signed as well.

2.

All went according to plan. She thought of him as an over-sexed robot, but was able to tolerate the arrangement mostly because he was out of the house for at least twelve hours a day, working the phones and the email from tax-exempt Gibraltar, and thinking up more stupid ideas for making money out of still more stupid people. At night, she stayed in her room watching DVDs and Sky TV. When he wanted her, he called her on the house intercom. When he was finished, she went back to her own bed.

She came to understand the reference to drugs in the contract. He used some kind of speed while he was at work, and in the evenings when he wanted to slow down he used some kind of muscle relaxant. And, of course, like all good geeks, he loved marijuana. On Friday nights, he would take something stronger: a morphine-based tranquilizer which made him almost catatonic. His penis was the only organ still functioning. He would lie on his back with a deeply smug look on his face and tell her what he wanted in a hoarse whisper.

Even the bondage and flagellation were not as humiliating as she'd expected. That was because she was a tad partial to both, so long as they were done right. She'd once had a boyfriend who was adept at making a girl horny. He had whispered in her ear, whilst working her clitoris, about how he was going to tie her up to a tree and rape her; make her meet him in a dark alley wearing only a raincoat and have her against a rough brick wall; put her on all fours and whip her while he plunged deep inside her. In the event,

he had done none of these things, perhaps because the stories and the finger work made her come in less than five minutes—but the seeds had been sown.

So when the Robot decided it was time to enforce that part of the contract, she wasn't too fearful. She was surprised he had the good taste to purchase thick velvet bonds with which he tied her hands and feet to the bed—she had been afraid thin nylon string would leave telltale marks. With all responsibility for everything taken from her shoulders, she found she could relax while he plunged away. Not for very long, though, the process raised such a stalk on him, he was finished in minutes.

The flagellation was the same, only more so. It seemed to her she had hardly roused herself to get on all fours and receive a half dozen tentative slaps with the whip—not more than harsh caresses really—when he expired in a heap and called for his dope. It was, of course, the state of dominance he craved. He was a control freak but not a violent man at all.

She did not know any other prostitutes, so could not compare experiences. She admitted that in terms of the retail of flesh, her situation was more Harrods than Tesco, but speaking only for herself, she had never had an easier job. Most of the time he was able to stimulate her enough for intercourse. When she was dry and not in the mood, she applied KY Jelly immediately after the fifteen-minute warning. He never lasted a full hour no matter what the variations.

She really didn't know what all the fuss was about. Surely women had been doing this one way or another for the hundred thousand years humans had been on earth? She could imagine herself in a previous incarnation as a cavewoman giving head in return for boiled mammoth knuckle. It was money for old rope—and best of all, she didn't have to cook or clean the house. He always ate takeaway from the box, and a Spanish maid, whom Penny supervised in an indulgent way, came three times a week. In return,

the maid accorded her the full respect due to a rich man's pampered mistress.

The months passed, she spent not a penny of her salary and enjoyed passing time on the beach during the day reading romantic historical novels to which she was addicted. Quite a few men showed an interest in her when she lay in her bikini on a towel—she was under thirty, pretty with a voluptuous body and owned that magic something which said '*good in bed*'—but she brushed them off, not only to keep faith with the contract, but because most of the time she was sexually exhausted. He may have been a sprinter more than a long distance runner, but the Robot was perpetually aroused by having a non-nagging sex slave at his command, and—looking at it from a slightly deeper point of view—obviously had no idea what to do with his fellow human beings other than to fuck them, whether virtually in Gib or literally in Sotto Grande. Only one thing intrigued her. He had made group sex a specific requirement, but so far there had been no sign of it. She was soon to realize why.

3.

'We're going to Bangkok,' he snapped.

'When?'

'Day after tomorrow. Got two first-class ticks from Rabat via Dubai—better than bloody London. We'll get whatever's going from here to Rabat. Ferry, then a limo, prob'ly. Start tomorrow.' He looked at her. 'See, I don't have the energy for threesomes while I'm working. This is vac time. Don't worry, I only go for pretty ones. Might want a few holiday pix though.'

'I'll start packing.'

'Carry-on only, I don't want to hang around waiting for check-in luggage. I'll buy whatever when we arrive. Silk's cheap over there. Might

buy some for bondage.’ He rubbed his hands.

The Robot had been to Thailand before and knew where to go. He took her to Patpong where they watched young brown women remove ping-pong balls and razor blades from their private parts, but this was only the warm-up. Later they went to a place called Nana where near-naked girls strutted their stuff on stage and a man could take his pick.

On the plane, he had told her what he meant by group sex. It would be her job to explain it to the girl once they got back to the hotel. To her surprise, he wanted to discuss with her which girl to choose. She found they had opposite tastes. He tended to go for the slightly taller, more assertive types while she liked the cute, petite ones.

At the end of the day though, for him it came down to tits. He hired one with large, firm mammaries and they took her back in the taxi like a pet. It was strange the way they both went out of their way to be nice to her—kindness itself, actually. She spoke almost no English, though, so Penny had to use sign language to explain:

Phase I: blowjob for Boss by guest worker while staff member gets licked by Boss;

Phase II: guest worker licks staffer while staffer gives head;

Phase III: Boss takes pix of guest worker lubricating staffer with her tongue;

Phase IV: guest worker gets under staffer to lick Boss while Boss rogers staffer.

When it was over, Mike slept between them and for the first time seemed to be at peace.

They repeated the exercise a couple of times with different girls, then Mike decided he wanted to spend a few days in the country. He'd done the beach thing too many times before; he wanted the mountains. Of course, if it was going to be for more than one night, it would have to be the right girl. On instinct, they chose one who was slightly older, perhaps late twenties. Her name was Om and she was from the mountains herself, so she would be a good guide. The Robot bought first-class tickets for all of them and off they flew to Mai Hong Song.

He found a hotel with large rooms and immediately demanded an orgy. Penny and Om already knew what to do from the night before, but this time everything had slowed down, perhaps because of the journey, the heat and the proximity of the jungle.

She didn't know why she thought the jungle made a difference, it just came into her head. When the moment came for her to lay on her back with his hard-on in her mouth and Om gently, patiently working her vagina with her tongue, she too felt an extraordinary serenity, a sense of relief of flesh surrounded by friendly flesh. Afterwards, Om grinned at her for coming so quickly.

By the next night, Penny had realized there was something very special about Om. The young Thai woman remained friendly and unfazed by anything they did together. She treated Penny as a pal and would tug at her breasts in a chummy way, as if they were sisters. She liked it when Penny did the same back. Om even gave Mike's cock friendly, non-erotic tugs from time to time, always with the same serenity, never losing her dignity.

This had a strange effect on Mike. He became even quieter than normal, watched Om with an increasingly gaping mouth, as if she were some kind of superior alien being.



It wasn't supposed to last long. Mike had planned for a ten-day vacation and had booked the return trip, but just when they were due to leave Mae Hong Song, he contracted some kind of stomach infection that left him pretty much nailed to the bed. He postponed the flight home.

He was fine in a couple of days, but strangely reluctant to leave. He asked Om where her home village was. She told him it was on the border with Burma, just a few miles away. He asked if they could go there. She said they could, but she could not have sex with them there—it would be strictly a case of her acting as guide. Penny was surprised that Mike agreed to this.

Om's village was really a collection of smallholdings where her kinsfolk grew rice and—secretly, up in the hills—opium. So there was no problem finding opium for Mike. Now he was really relaxed. The only problem: he wanted to sleep between Om and Penny. Om said that was okay, they would be like family—so long as there was no sex. How would anyone know if they were having sex or not, the three of them? Om seemed surprised at the question. She said it was obvious if three people were having sex together or not.

‘But you’ve both gotta be naked, right?’ Mike said.

Om said that would be okay; it was so damn hot, she only wore a sarong anyway.

So they ended up in a bamboo hut with a springy bamboo floor, on the edge of dense jungle, with Mike smoking his opium and gratefully—blissfully—lying between them like a baby, wallowing in the proximity of unlimited naked female flesh.

For the first time, he began to talk like a real human. How awful his home life was: an alcoholic father, hard bitch for a mother, brothers all in prison, mostly for burglary and armed robbery. A hell he'd only escaped thanks to his gift for computer science and Internet games. ‘You think I’m

weird? That lot can hardly talk at all,' he said.

When he was in an opium dream, Penny talked to Om. She told the guest worker about her contract with Mike.

'He's not so bad, really. Very screwed up, but actually honourable. I mean, he does everything he promised under the contract, he just can't seem to relate to people, that's all.'

Om said she didn't see anything different about him from other *farang*. Penny took this to include herself—did she strike Om as a female version of Mike?

'Of course,' Om said with a smile.

'You mean a total mess, don't you?'

'I mean very sick,' Om said.

She then explained that she had only gone on the game for a short while to pay off a debt her mother had incurred purchasing medicine for her father who had recently died. Thanks to Mike, she would be able to pay off the debt. When Mike and Penny had gone, she would become a *mai chee*: a Buddhist nun. She wanted to spend the rest of her life in meditation.

Now Penny thought she understood Om's dignity. As far as the Thai woman was concerned, she was not practicing a form of debauchery so much as administering therapy to two pink-faced psychotics.

When Penny thought about it, she tended to agree. She had looked down on Mike as being sub-human—but was she really so different herself? It was the leap of imagination that was hard to make at first, until you got used to it: the West as the source of a world psychosis that was destroying humanity.

When you put it like that in so many words, it seemed obviously true. Look at how people were today: spoilt brats at best, enraged loonies in their hearts most of the time.

'We all hate each other,' she admitted to Om, with a gasp.

Om nodded and told Penny she should meditate. She explained that Mike had to have opium because he was too far gone to meditate, he would never break through the reinforced concrete of his ego, but for Penny, a woman with a good heart, there was a chance.

Now Penny found herself encouraging Mike with his opium habit, so she could stay on a few more days with Om and learn to meditate. Both women made sure Mike had plenty of *fin* to keep him quiet while they went to temple and sat in silence in a semi-lotus position. Penny knew she was slow in spiritual matters, but not entirely without talent. With Om's help, she developed a vague understanding of the ancient teaching and an appreciation of the peace it could bring to the heart.

When Mike was able to walk, which happened for a couple of hours in the evening of each day, he would wander into the jungle and sit on a fallen tree trunk. That must have been where he caught cerebral malaria.

Penny flew into a panic. She didn't want a person's death on her conscience; she wanted to get him to a hospital in the UK straight away, but Om wasn't so keen. She thought that if Mike died there in her village surrounded by monks whispering into his ear, there was a chance he would be reborn as a human, maybe even as a Thai Buddhist, so he would have a great chance of personal evolution in his next life.

If he went back to the West, on the other hand, even if he was in time to be cured, he would just go back to his old ways and be reborn as a rat or something even lower down the scale.

Penny gulped. This was another leap she was not prepared for. Her mind immediately thought up a good old British compromise: suppose they got him to Bangkok and, when he was better, introduce him to Buddhism? Okay, he might not achieve a human rebirth that way, but he could maybe reach monkey or chimpanzee level—further up the scale than rat, anyway. She

hardly realized how her thinking had changed under Om's influence.

'I'll do whatever you want,' Om said with a smile.

Penny understood this was some kind of test the Buddha was putting her through. Had she got the message strongly enough to dare to do let Mike die?

Mercifully, for the Buddha was nothing if not compassionate, the decision was made for her. Mike succumbed to the particularly virulent form of the disease in just over thirty-six hours. Om made sure that nine monks sat around his deathbed connected by a piece of white string and chanting in a way that his spirit could hear and understand.

After they had burned his body in the temple oven, Penny said: 'I want to stay here, but I could never be a nun—I don't have your kind of strength.'

'I know,' Om said.

As it happened, one of her brothers had recently lost his wife, also to malaria. He was a good big-hearted guy, if a bit lazy, with a huge beer gut and a big sprawling house full of scruffy kids just down the road ...

### **About the author:**

John Burdett was brought up in North London and attended Warwick University where he read English and American Literature. This left him largely unemployable until he re-trained as a barrister and went to work in Hong Kong. He made enough money there to retire early to write novels. To date he has published six novels, including the Bangkok series: *Bangkok 8*, *Bangkok Tattoo*, *Bangkok Haunts* and *The Godfather of Kathmandu*.

# Breaking Glass

Dawn Farnham, Singapore

*Slut*, she thought as Alex ran his hand through his silky black hair. It was a movement which allowed his coat to fall open revealing the outline of his narrow waist and toned torso against his shirt. Within a second, his hair had fallen again, boyishly, onto his forehead.

She was looking at him over the rim of the coffee cup from inside her office. He was talking to one of the secretaries. *Talking to? Chatting up, sexing up more like*, she thought. He was a typical male slut. He was the director and star of his own show, moving the rest of the cast, women and men alike, like puppets. He used his looks and intelligence like a plunging neckline, to get what he wanted; success, status, approval, attention. But he was very, very good. It was effortless.

Apart from this one movement of his hand, he stood still when he talked to the girls in the office, a certain stillness that seemed to speak of depths, of virile assurance. We would go slow, it said, I'm a man with a slow hand. It was the girls that moved, swaying into him, inclining their empty heads towards his lips, putting out their hands to his arm as if was a magnet and they were iron filings.

Iron filings; it was good, she thought. Dancing around him like mindless shavings, throwing themselves against him, flattened, will-less, until he

turned off the charm and they fell sliding to the floor.

He glanced towards her office. It was the tiniest movement of his eyes, but she saw it. She had studied him. At length. He was Chinese, like her, but he had come from privilege and old money, and she from the HDB Heartlands of Singapore. They were matched in education, credentials and abilities, but they'd got to this place along very different roads. Alex was the only thing that stood in her way to the top of one of the most powerful companies in the Lion City.

The week's events would decide which of them got the job of managing director in the company. The chairman was looking at retirement in a few years. Whoever got the job would be the next big boss. Level playing field, the chairman had said. He was a man of principle, of an old-fashioned kind of morality in life and in business, and she believed him. The glass ceiling was only cracked and splintered in many companies, but in this one, she felt she could smash it with her fist and reach the stars beyond. It was an incredible feeling.

Alex had tried very hard to charm her and she had been very careful to be casually and smilingly uncharmed. He was discreet, but women talked and she was certain of his intentions. The only way to get what he wanted was to discredit her. The only way he could do that was to seduce her.

He was tempting though, she had to admit, from the safety of her office as he walked down the corridor. He moved like a boxer, light on his feet, broad-shouldered, powerful, lithe, athletic. He was all promise. A promise of smouldering heat, skin on skin, of dreamy and intoxicating bliss. He stirred fantasies in a woman's head. Dangerous fantasies. She put down her coffee and took a long drink of cold water.

The four-day meeting with the clients was at an island resort. One of those places with seven-hundred-dollar-a-night native cabanas on a perfect tropical beach.

The island was erotically charged. It was ridiculous to bring a delegation of business executives and clients to such a place, away from husbands and boyfriends, wives and girlfriends. When she was boss, she'd make sure they had four-day conferences in tents in Siberia. Survival was just the thing to knock sex on the head.

Dinner was a pleasant affair, the clients happy, the food good, the wine flowing. Alex had offered a dance, but she had refused. Getting into proximity with him was not a good idea. As she left for her cabana, she saw he had his arms round one of the secretaries and felt a momentary twinge of envy, which quickly vanished.

She took a bath and changed into her nightgown, let down her long, glossy, black hair and looked at herself in the mirror. Thirty-nine, figure good, button nose, great eyes, skin still fresh, pert tits. She laughed and poured a glass of champagne.

There was a knock. Room service with more champagne, she hoped. Perhaps Siberia was a bit harsh.

‘Suchen, sorry it’s so late.’

Alex was standing at the door. His eyes left hers and dropped slowly down her body. It was a look of pure admiration. She had nothing on underneath this thin garment and, she suddenly realized, her breasts were outlined against the satin.

‘Alex,’ she said, unmoving. Let him look. See what he’s missing for the rest of his life.

‘Just need to see if we agree on some figures before tomorrow’s big

meeting. Whatever's happening between us, we can't look like fools in front of the clients.'

She looked down and saw his laptop. This was highly dubious and really not worthy of him.

'Tomorrow morning, early. At breakfast, plenty of time. Goodnight.'

The problem was her voice was steady, but her heart rate had risen. Damn the man, attractive bastard. She always avoided being close to him and now he was standing one foot away and with that infuriating magnetic stillness.

'Don't be iron filings, Suchen,' she said to herself. She took a breath and made to close the door. He put out his hand and she looked at him, indignant.

'What—' she began.

'Sorry, orders from chairman. Check your phone.'

She frowned and turned. Her phone was on the bedside table and she looked at it. There was a message. It must have come in whilst she was in the bath. Some problem with the figures, he said. Check it out tonight.

When she turned back, Alex had closed the door, put his laptop on the desk and was looking at her. She suddenly realized she was in silhouette against the lamp and moved away.

He took off his coat and hung it on the back of the chair. He was wearing a white fitted T-shirt and it showed every dip and line of his flat abdomen and the muscles of his tanned arms.

Her mind began to spiral off in unwanted carnal directions. She felt an involuntary spasm between her legs.

*Oh, no, no*, she thought. *No, you don't*. 'Be right back.'

She grabbed some clothes and went into the bathroom. She tied her hair up in a thick elastic ribbon. When her hair was down, silky smooth to her waist, she felt wanton. That would not do at all. She could certainly not



sit around working with no clothes on. Sensible cotton bra and panties, plain T-shirt and good solid jeans. These were proof against any man's charms. She looked at the bottle of champagne in the ice bucket.

A few minutes later she came out. 'Champagne?' she said, putting the ice bucket on the coffee table. Alex poured himself a glass and drank.

'Might be a long, hard night,' he said, refilling his glass. She raised an eyebrow. She was pretty sure he'd emphasized 'long' and 'hard'. Subtle, she thought. He smiled and finished the glass of champagne.

She opened her laptop and sat at the desk. Alex drew a chair next to hers. They worked on the figures and quickly saw the problem. In no time, they'd straightened it out. He was smart and quick and really a pleasure to work with.

His arm brushed hers.

Her mind began a downward spiral of swirling coloured lights, like the credits of a bad Seventies movie.

Alex's hand moved behind her. In a swift movement, he pulled the ribbon which bound her hair and it cascaded down her back.

'Suchen,' he whispered. 'You are really beautiful.'

She felt the rising beat of her blood. It was the hair making her wanton, and she searched for the ribbon.

'What do you think you're doing,' she said, and her breath was a gasp.

'Making love to you,' he said as he ran his fingers into her hair and held her head and his mouth was suddenly on her neck, his lips soft, soft, kissing her, small kisses up her neck, under her ear. She felt as if she was melting. When he moved his lips to her cheek and began kissing and nibbling her mouth, she found the willpower to pull away.

'Stop this, Alex,' she said thickly.

But he didn't stop, though she tried weakly to push him away. He took

her hand and put it down between his legs. She felt the bulge and she could imagine the very cells of his blood coursing, expanding, engorging.

He took her mouth in his as if it was his right, a kiss of deep softness, and moved her hand on him, growing harder by the second.

‘Do you want me to stop?’ he murmured against her mouth.

*Futile*, was about the last thing she thought. ‘No,’ she breathed. ‘Get naked.’

He stood, taking her with him. She sank to her knees in front of him as if she was at the altar of some erotic god. He took off his belt, slowly, like a damn striptease artist.

She licked her lips, waiting, like a child waits for candy. His pants dropped over his hips to the floor. He had no underwear and her eyes flew open and she took him into her mouth, moving her tongue and lips around and along him, listening to the cues of his moans. She wanted to taste every inch of this hard wonderful thing he owned, the feeling so strong, she began to kiss and lick him in a groaning frenzy.

Then he pulled away gently and leant down and brought her up to him. ‘Too fast,’ he said breathlessly. ‘Wait.’

He took off her T-shirt. She scrambled to get out of her jeans, and by the time he’d taken off her bra, they were both naked. She went to the bed. *No subtlety here*, she thought dimly. He was hard and beautiful. She felt dripping with wetness, ready for him.

Not yet, the look in his bottomless brown eyes seemed to say. His hair fell over his face as he dropped his mouth to her breasts, leaning over her, the smooth skin of his chest touching her belly, his soft lips on her nipples, moving his tongue until she felt like fire. She clutched him, willing him to come into her, so ready she thought she might ignite. The thought made her smile, even in the midst of these swirling emotions.

‘Alex,’ she said.

‘Not yet.’

He moved down her body, running his fingers into her wetness, then buried his head between her legs. She was not ready for the jolt which shook her as his tongue played with her, and she clutched his hair; *don't stop, don't stop*. The orgasm shook her, wave on wave sending her body into delicious, mind-darkening spasms.

As the light returned dimly, he rose and pushed himself inside her, sliding silky, thickly smooth and her hips rose to him, her body shuddering with absolute, mind-altering desire. She wound her arms around his perfect neck and slipped down the path of ecstasy.

They moved like great dancers, each movement a whispered response the one to the other, until she felt a rush of blood so powerful it pounded in her ears and she clutched him to her, wanting to enter his body, melt into his flesh. The orgasm lifted her hips off the bed and a river of hot liquid ran over him, drenching him in desire. He began to move hard, taking her hips in his arm, his mouth on hers, grinding his lips against hers, needing her flesh, and she clung to him until he came over the edge and fell down the long precipice with a great groan.

\* \* \*

She looked at him. He was still slumbering like a baby. She smiled. She put the sleeping pills back in the cabinet, poured the rest of the champagne down the sink and rinsed the bottle. He'd be out all night.

She undressed him and took her lace stretch panties and her garter stockings and put them on him. The fit was very snug, but it just looked even sexier. A little eye shadow, mascara and her red lipstick. This was quite fun.

He was intensely alluring, strangely erotic even, and she let her hand linger, stroking the sexy bulge under the lace. He moved slightly and she reluctantly removed her hand.

She got her phone and took several photos from various angles. She made sure the newspaper with the date was in them, along with the hotel's logo. She uploaded them to her computer and filed them under 'Was it Good for You?' Who could say where they might leak out to?

He was tempting, all the delicious hard beauty of him. Before she cleaned him up, dressed him and called housekeeping to take him back to his room, there was time. She kissed his ruby lips. Then she sat by him, propped up against the pillows, her legs spread, and ran one hand over the muscles of his smooth chest.

Her mind began a downward spiral of swirling coloured lights, like the credits of a bad Seventies movie.

#### **About the author:**

Dawn Farnham is the author of *The Red Thread*, *The Shallow Seas* and *The Hills of Singapore*, three of a four-part series of historical novels set in 19th century Singapore - *The Straits Quartet*.

Her short stories are featured in anthologies and she has received grants from the Singapore Film Commission for her screenplays.

She is the author of *Fan Goes to Sea*, and has been contracted to write four more children's books.

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# Club Koyaanisquatsi

Miss Izzy, Singapore

“On a diet?” she asked, giving him a lopsided smile that spoke of contempt and a gross fascination with his bulbous shape.

She was beyond beautiful, with straight, smooth dark hair tied tightly into a French braid and a body of toned, tensed muscles wrapped over a slender frame. Her pale breasts nearly spilled out of an indecently buttoned blouse.

He had been inspecting the chocolate bars on the whole-foods shelf: 100% organic, high in protein, antioxidants, good cholesterol—but laden with three hundred calories, the equivalent of one meal under his new diet. He looked at her glumly, a little confused. She raised an eyebrow; “Well?” it said. Her smile taunted him for an answer.

“Uh ... yes. On a diet.”

She chuckled audibly before stopping herself by jamming her teeth on the end of her thumbnail. “Sorry, sorry. I couldn’t help it. But I know exactly what your problem is,” she told him.

Kenneth didn’t know whether to feel angry and insulted or flattered that a woman like her was even interested enough in him to say more than, “Hi!” Yet, an undeniable interest in her eyes suggested something beyond a cruel desire to make fun of him. Perhaps his embarrassment at being seen

like an alien object showed on his face because her expression softened. She apologised.

“I know how you feel,” she said. “And I know what you need to do. You need to stop being afraid of life. When the excitement of other things becomes the chief motivation in your life, then the lazy comfort of food is less of a necessity.”

Kenneth looked at her blankly for a moment before he managed to absorb what she had just said. “Uh ... okay,” he replied lamely.

“Come to my place for dinner tonight. Forget your diet. I’ll make sure of it,” she said smiling, her lips curling with excitement. Kenneth swore that look she gave him was carnivorous, but he pushed it out of his mind almost immediately. She pulled out her loyalty card for a club called Koyaanisquatsi, with her name and number on it, and told him to call her later in the evening.

“Just before nine. Let me get my apartment in order and cook up a little something before you arrive. Don’t play me out,” she said, turning on her heel and walking away.

\* \* \*

He had turned up that night, and the last couple of weeks had seen the most bizarre days of his otherwise mundane existence. Club Koyaanisquatsi had turned out to be an exclusive place for sexual perversions of all manner, and although it had frightened him initially, making him run away, he came back soon enough.

The decision had been sealed when, the morning after his daunting first introduction to the club, his chaste girlfriend Lynette called before dawn to tell him how much she loved him and to ask if he would please quickly decide on a date for their marriage so she could have her fucking babies and

they could use her dying mother's money to live together in a flat somewhere in the arse of Singapore.

Club Koyaanisquatsi frightened his balls off, but it was a fantasy like he'd never experienced before. He put down the phone on Lynette with a smouldering anger inside, not against the poor girl, but against himself. That he had been so afraid all his life and stayed fearful of "attempting the uncharted experiences of physical sensation." That was the exact phrase Vanessa used, and he quite liked the sound of it.

\* \* \*

It was a Thursday night, and Kenneth was having problems finding something he was comfortable playing with to add another stamp to his loyalty card. He'd exhausted the number of times he could claim credit for getting his bottom paddled by the newly initiated dominatrix, and he'd done with the horsehair whip as well. That, he thought was quite unpleasant and unexciting but no worse than getting a tattoo.

He looked at the girls lying on the dining tables, having sushi eaten off their bodies, and wished he could just do that. It actually looked exciting and relatively easy, though he wasn't quite sure about the wasabi on the balls. But people had to invite you to serve them and only the most gorgeous ever had any opportunity at all.

Vanessa came into the room and spotted him almost immediately; she had a knack of doing that. Kenneth felt like her pet project of late. It seemed that she was adamant about turning him into one of the Koyaanisquatsi clergy: the sexiest, most louche individuals in the "family"—a term Vanessa liked to use when referring to the members of the club. He thought she was out of her mind, of course. Those people were like her: rich, sexy, and

when they weren't spanking each other in lion cages, they lounged over expensive cigars late into the night and discussed Derrida and the possibility of comprehending the breadth and depth of infinity.

She invited him to have dinner with her, and as they passed the statue of a gargoyle that he thought looked vaguely like an armadillo, he dropped some money into it, making sure to do so only when Vanessa was clearly not looking. He was ashamed of the paltry amount of money he could afford to put into the donation box. No matter how often Vanessa told him the club was rich enough, that money was not an issue, he would always feel ashamed of being unable to contribute more.

They settled at a table, and as soon as they took their seats, a girl in a kimono came over and threw herself onto the table. As her body hit the black marble, her arms and legs splayed and her kimono burst open to offer her naked body. Another girl followed and started laying sushi on her. Kenneth had gone through the whole routine every night he'd come to the club, but he still cringed when the wasabi was slathered onto the girl's clit.

As soon as the girl had thrown herself onto the table and assumed a comatose demeanour, a few other people joined them at the long bench, seating themselves politely on either side of the girl, everyone sitting cross-legged on tatami mats. Vanessa broke the silent anticipation by saying grace: "Thank you for the body upon which we nourish ourselves, for her absolute worthiness as an individual, and ours, and our right to help ourselves to all the pleasures of life. The right to get drunk on the beauty of our existence and celebrate its autonomy from death and eternity. Amen."

She picked up a piece of glistening raw tuna on rice, dipped it into the puddle of soy sauce poured into the cavity of the girl's belly, and pressed it against the pearl of wasabi on her clit. Everyone else followed suit, eating neatly and slowly, occasionally pausing to sip from little cups of sake. Some



people engaged in polite conversation about nothing much; the couple across from Kenneth seemed to be contemplating inviting the bagel-delivery boy from their office to the club. Then the lady beside Vanessa decided to break the prevailing protocol and started eating sushi off the girl's body without her chopsticks. She climbed on top of the girl and picked a piece off her shoulder with her teeth, dipped it in soy, rubbed it against her clit and tilted her head, allowing it to slide easily into her mouth. Everyone followed suit. Everyone except Kenneth: he never felt worthy, no matter how many times Vanessa intoned that prayer of hers.

There were seven people participating now, all licking, sucking, fondling, jostling one another, kissing one another. But mostly they teased the girl, and she tried her best to bear the sensations without revealing that she felt anything. Some of the men had taken their cocks out and were slapping them on her face, her breasts. The woman who had been sitting beside Vanessa now sat on the girl's face, and Kenneth felt embarrassed for the man trying to get his cock into the girl. At the same time, Kenneth wished he could be the one pushing his cock into her tight wet pussy.

The girl on the table was so petite and so pretty, she looked barely eighteen. He wondered who she was and how she'd ended up here. But she was no slave. He saw her lips curl into a self-satisfied smile as the man above her gasped, his cock having finally managed to force itself into her.

Vanessa asked to look at Kenneth's card, and he slipped it to her uncertainly. She had a habit of suggesting, quite forcefully, he try things he wasn't ready for. But then again, if she never had, he would never have done anything. He had been to clubs like Koyaanisquatsi before, and all ever he'd done previously was sit in a corner nursing his drink with a confused erection in his pants.

Vanessa looked at him with a glimmer in her eye when she saw he'd used

up all the Level One tasks, then nodded knowingly to herself. She pointed to the medical table, and Kenneth looked at her, his eyes wide with fear, mouth partially open in silent protest, head shaking in small, terrified turns.

“Trust me,” she said. “You won’t get hurt. Have you gotten hurt yet?”

Kenneth thought angrily to himself that he most certainly had, but then remembered that, to Vanessa, getting hurt meant being mutilated beyond hope of recovery without medical care. Anything that the body could get over naturally was acceptable.

“Look, it’s the easiest thing for you to do at this point in time. All you have to do is take this,” she said, handing him a little blue pill.

“But I don’t have erectile dysfunction,” he insisted, a little distraught at not knowing what manner of weirdness was about to happen to him.

“Surely, when something good is offered, you don’t reject it. You might think it’s nonsense now, but you’ll see it isn’t. Why do we have to keep on having this conversation every time something new is introduced to you?” she asked, her voice both pleading and tired. She pushed a lock of hair from her face in frustration and half-glared at him, her eyes saying, “Why are you being so difficult? It’s your freedom I’m fighting for here.”

Kenneth looked at her, feeling a little ashamed. He knew she wasn’t completely right about certain things, but he was certain of having become less and less afraid of life with every session. The problem of his impending marriage to Lynette was also becoming clearer to him. He didn’t need her any more, not her constant worry about having children or her indelible hold on his financial security. Alright, she had money, not that much, and he didn’t. Fuck it. He shot down half a Spiegelau glass of whisky on the rocks, took the pill and went to the table.

Vanessa watched as a young boy and girl came to remove his clothing. She could see how insecure he still was about his body, and rightly so, she

thought. The girl pulled his pants down unfeelingly and Vanessa felt pity at how soft he was around the stomach, how the hair grew in patches just above his crotch. He had an awful slouch and slightly sallow skin on the areas he never allowed to see the sun.

Worse, Vanessa thought, he was the only one in this whole damn place that looked truly naked, in the saddest sense of the word, when he had his clothes off. He wanted to be like the other men and women, to be like her. Wrap himself up in a Calvin Klein body, burnish that body with some artificial bronzing, be moulded like a Tinseltown star in the gym. He needed a good diet and a workout every so often, but there was something raw in his soft, unpolished body that drew Vanessa to him. His body both fascinated and repulsed her.

She told him to lie on the table, and uncertainly, but with utmost resignation, he did. He lay there and said nothing, even though he felt slightly ridiculous, the sensation of ridicule increasing as Vanessa strapped him onto the table with thick leather belts, securing his calves and his shoulders to the cold metal slab. By now, the pill's contents were starting to course through his blood, and he had an erection as massive as any he had ever had in his life and felt certain he was going to have a heart attack.

He expected Vanessa to leave him in a moment, like she always did after she'd made sure he wasn't going anywhere, and for another girl to take over. But this time, she leaned over him, her face so close he could feel her breath on his cheek. She smiled and asked, "So, are you any different now?"

"I don't get what you mean."

"Now. From then. Two weeks ago."

"I don't know," he replied. "I mean, I don't know what you mean."

"Liar," she said, her voice laden with malice as she climbed over him and hitched up the bottom third of her dress. "You do not debase my

efforts *just like that* by being an idiot. Think. It's been different, hasn't it? You'd have come in your pants two weeks ago if I did this to you," she said, lowering herself over him. Her perfume was strong and it made him dizzy, and as unlikely as it was, he got even harder.

She pulled out a slender knife hidden in her garter and pressed the blunt edge against his chest. She smiled when he cringed and looked up at her, afraid. She lowered herself onto him, her labia against his erection, and he felt just what she was like for the first time. His hardness pressed against her but wouldn't go in, he was slightly too big. He felt embarrassed. He knew he would come soon, too soon for Vanessa's liking, and he would feel so ashamed. It was absurd, everything was. He wasn't like one of *them*; all these people had monstrous egos, and rightly so. He was a little turd their priestess had taken a fancy to, and that was all he would ever be in this place.

But being Lynette's little turd would be worse, he reminded himself, and closed his eyes, trying to think about other things so he wouldn't come.

He felt her press herself against him, trying to push his erection in and in, but she remained closed. She pushed harder, he felt uncomfortable, she was too dry. But she didn't care, forcing herself hard onto him. She was wet inside, and he went in easily the moment she'd forced herself open. Her crotch slammed painfully against his, and she gasped with satisfaction. Looking at her under half-closed lids, he saw her pull the knife away from his chest and place it slowly, sharp edge down, against the area just above his collar bone.

"Don't move," she said. "It will hurt."

The middle of the table split open vertically, just the bottom half where his legs were, just enough to pull his buttocks apart. Vanessa remained straddled over him, her knife against his flesh, rocking herself on his erection. His heart was pounding, and he felt the adrenaline rush soaking his system

and chilling his body. He both loved and hated the fear of waiting for the unknown to happen: he had gotten used to the whipping and the spanking, but this he couldn't anticipate. He'd never been on one of the tables before.

He couldn't think about that though; under the table, something or someone was running a piece of wet, cold cloth between his buttocks, and he couldn't stop himself from shivering with anxiousness and embarrassment. No one had wiped his buttocks since he was three, and it made him feel humiliated. It went the entire length, from the base of his spine to the base of his balls: up and down, again and again. Wet, cold, and slow.

He lay as still as he could, trying his best not to cringe, although he badly wanted to make the face he was in the habit of making when he'd down gulps of very strong, very bad rum. Then the wiping stopped, and he could feel the end of a cold, metal dildo tease the entrance to his bum. The dildo slipped in a little, pulled out, then slipped in a little again. And it continued like that for some time, until he was tormented with fear and anticipation. He wanted it inside, but he knew it was going to hurt, and he still didn't like pain very much. It wasn't in his personality; he had the singular inability to endure pain passively, as Vanessa and the rest were capable of doing.

He bit his lip and repeated in his head that everything would be fine. That was one of the ironclad rules of the club: no one died, no one got irreversibly hurt unless they did it to themselves. Yes, everything would be fine.

Then it happened: the dildo forced itself completely into him, and he felt it tearing his flesh, just so slightly, but the small wound seared through his body, and he bit his lower lip until it bled to distract him from the pain. It was a pity he couldn't have an orgasm there and then, he thought, because he'd read somewhere orgasms were great for numbing pain while they lasted.

But he didn't come, and he would have to wait some time to find out. At that moment, he was only thankful for the straps holding him down. He

would have gasped and jerked himself into the knife otherwise. The sharp pain seared through his anal orifice and he could feel himself starting to cry. This was truly horrid. He knew what had gone inside him, he'd seen it before. It looked completely innocent when you observed it—the smoothest, wettest dildo ever—but it hurt, bloody hell. It hurt.

Vanessa looked at him, slightly concerned for perhaps the first time, but erased any trace of this emotion almost instantaneously. She'd clearly lost her desire to carry on and unsaddled him, putting the knife back into the holster on her garter and smoothing her skirt down. She looked at him for a moment before she decided to remove the dildo from his bottom.

“You didn't say stop,” she said, looking at him curiously, pleased and a little triumphant.

“No. I suppose I didn't. I've become so used to believing everything will be fine,” Kenneth panted when he had recovered and Vanessa had removed the straps binding him. She nodded her head like she had heard that said many times before, then walked away distractedly without even bidding him good night.

He put on his clothes in a daze and decided to go home. He would normally have lingered for a while after he had fulfilled his criteria for the night, watching things other members did to themselves and wondering how they managed it. He'd look at them attempting stunts he'd never imagined: real whips, real knives, iron rods smouldering from a fresh fire. Suddenly, he wanted to try them all, each and every one. More and more, the appeal of Club Koyaanisquatsi grew on him, and the fear those practices held for him waned. What had been foreign and dangerous, machines and mindsets that threatened to topple the order of what he believed to be right, felt freeing and energising.

This world of the club, he decided, was no worse and no better than the

one he was casting off. He wasn't so afraid any longer of things that couldn't actually hurt him, or even of things that could.

**About the author:**

Isabella's 15 minutes of fame was founded in her sarongpartygirl blog and a supporting role in the Cannes Sélection officielle docu-drama *Pleasure Factory*. The ex-high society escort and fetish model now works in digital design and marketing, which she believes is total wank, and writes erotic science-fiction for fun.

# Painin

Brenton Rossow, Thailand

I forgot to write Painin's phone number in my notebook. I could check it from one of her emails or go to the restaurant where she worked and ask one of her old workmates. I'd told Painin I would stay at the same bungalow but I didn't tell her the time I was arriving. It was stupid to think she'd be waiting for me. The man at the guesthouse said he hadn't seen her, so I pissed the colour of a hornbill's beak and headed towards her old restaurant. Painin's friend remembered me and giggled when she asked if I was Painin's darling, and tried to call *my baby*. The first time she didn't get through. The second time she got a hold of Painin as I was washing my hands in the bathroom.

I began to feel anxious. I adjusted my shirt, so I didn't look fat and positioned my chair so I could see Painin when she came into the restaurant. After a dry sandwich, I began leaning over the balustrade so I could see her as she drove up the street. I began to feel sleepy, stretched out on some cushions and fell asleep.

When I awoke an hour later, Painin still hadn't arrived. I went downstairs to speak to her friend with the mobile. After trying a few times and getting an engaged signal her friend got through and handed me the phone.

'Hello'

'Who's this?'



‘It’s Blinch from Thailand.’

‘You no like me. Why you want see me?’

My heart sank. *What’s she talking about? What’s she playing at?*

‘If I didn’t like you, why would I come all the way to Vientiane? It’s Blinch from Thailand. I was here six weeks ago. We sent each other emails. I miss you ... I want to see you.’

‘I busy working now. I told you we finish already. I not want see you.’

‘What? What are you talking about? You never said we were finished. Come and see me at the bungalow.’

‘Okay. I come see you at 4 pm.’

*What happened?* My heart began fluttering all over the shop. *Why would she send me those emails saying she wanted to see me, then blow me off like a pencil shaving?*

I picked up my bag, smiled faintly at the girl in the restaurant who was blushing with embarrassment and began walking down the street. How sure I had been that our story would turn out the way I wanted. How confident I had been as I boarded the bus to Vientiane with photographs of Painin and Sai in the top pocket of my rucksack.

I decided to visit Uncle Mimi. Old Funky Lips wasted no time skinning up. We sat upstairs on his balcony, blowing smoke clouds into the street. He waited patiently, every so often nodding his head. Then, after I finished my story, he told me to forget Painin and find myself a new girl.

‘Many girl,’ he said, patting my shoulder. ‘Lucky you no kid.’

I thanked Uncle Mimi, stepped out the doorway—heart hurting like crazy as the weed weaseled its way into my stream—and walked into the sunshine. In a vacant block across the street, I noticed some artists had strung paintings between the branches of a few spindly trees and fastened them together on a length of string. Cigarette at lip, beer in hand, I began to lose

myself in the colours of jungle villages and the swirl of water lilies. I felt a warm hand on my shoulder. I turned and Painin was standing in front of me; toes hanging from high heels, miniskirt and a tight white midriff.

She looked up, smiled and took my hand.

‘I was with my friend and I saw you look painting, so I come see.’

‘I missed you, Painin. I don’t understand why you’re angry with me. I came all this way to be with you. What’s going on?’

‘You not help me when I ask you send money for motorbike. You not call. You not care.’

‘Of course I care, but what could I do? I have to work six weeks before I get a holiday. It was impossible to come and see you right away.’

She raised her eyebrows and squeezed my hand. Looking down, I noticed she was carrying a plastic bag.

‘What’s that?’

‘My new telephone, I just bought from market. I borrow money from friend.’

‘How much was it?’

‘Seven thousand. It have many song and photograph. It very expensive.’

Something in the back of my mind registered things weren’t okay, but I kept staring, hypnotized by her voluptuous lines.

‘Where are we going?’ I asked as she led me by the hand.

‘I want go temple.’

‘Here,’ I said reaching into my rucksack. ‘Here are some photos of you, Sai and my apartment in Thailand.’

She studied them, carefully lingering on the photo of my apartment, then stood on tippy toes and kissed me. It was a long slow kiss, full of absence and ecstasy. I held her by the hipbone and relished her warm tanned skin. She reached down and grabbed my balls, looked me in the eyes ... let go ...

then continued walking. We walked past the temple and across the road to the grassy banks of The Kong.

Three of her friends appeared to be waiting outside a restaurant. It was obvious I'd be picking up the check. If I refused to go along with her plan, I'd embarrass Painin and she'd be furious.

One of Painin's friends—Noi the Freeloader—was slouched in a plastic chair, smiling in the sunshine. The sight of her made me queasy and flyblown.

On this occasion—quite like the first time I'd met her—she failed to acknowledge me. She quickly grabbed Painin by the elbow, turned her back and began devolving her plan.

From the moment I met Noi, I was aware she was young and foolish, but I was forced to tolerate her. The previous time we'd met she rolled up at a restaurant Painin and I were eating at as if it was her right to be there and my sole purpose was to pick up the bill. It made me sad to think Noi was poisoning Painin with her schemes. Every time I looked at her, she sprayed a sickly green film across my skin.

'You okay, Noi?' I asked, best I could.

She raised her eyebrows as if to say *Fuck off loser—I'm just here for the freebee*, ducked her head to avoid a pot plant and catapulted herself inside. Painin's other friends—two tall, tanned sisters whom I'd never met—appeared friendly. We sat down at a table—Painin and Noi ordering food—and before I knew it, a banquet appeared. As the older sister and I spoke, she gave me the feeling she felt sorry for me, politely refilling my glass while Noi and Painin exchanged glances.

'I'm going home tomorrow. My father sick. I need you give money.'

I just played along, but what I was really thinking was *Come on, Painin ... you're smarter than that.*

'Really ... you're going back to your village? How about I come with

you so I can meet your family?’

Noi nearly choked on a piece of pork that was swirling about her mouth and rushed to the toilet. The two sisters looked into their drinks, slightly ashamed. I took Painin by the hand and led her into the sunshine.

What the fuck was I doing? Her shoes were too small and her toes hung out like monkey digits. Her skirt was too tight and when she sat, a few flab rolls appeared. But they weren’t ugly flab rolls and her toes appeared primal and sexual. She’d run a slight wave through her hair and sported a new pair of goofy aviators. No matter how much shite she spun, no matter how many financial demands, I couldn’t help being attracted to her. I kept telling myself she was a good girl at heart and she could change if I got her away from sneaky friends like Noi the Freeloader.

We walked back to the restaurant and said goodbye to Noi and the two tall tanned sisters. Her motorbike was parked next to a security guard and it looked shinier than the last time I’d seen it. We skidded along the gravel, slowly hiccupped through the streets and made our way back to my bungalow.

Painin threw herself on the bed with her knees up and her peach-coloured knickers showing, fanning her legs like the wings of a butterfly. I kissed a kneecap and stepped into the shower to wash the journey’s sweat from my skin.

When I returned, she had her knickers off and was smiling. I leapt on the bed and began kissing her neck—soft sweet stamens of a spider orchid—then dragged my tongue to the outskirts of her belly and got lost in the trees. She laid back, smiling—devil in the eyes, lips quivering—and fiddled with her new phone. A song played and it was modern and slick—not exactly romantic—but full of the latest guitar sounds with a heavy bass beat.

I lost consciousness. My spirit hovered. I disappeared inside the vines of a deserted temple and knelt at the dripping feet of an ancient mollusk. I

collapsed beside her as orange swamp gas exuded from the pores of my skin. I was born again: immortal—everything perfect—reality a ghost without a name.

Painin stood, smiled and walked into the bathroom, lathered herself in soap and let the water run hard. I picked up my guitar and a sense of weightlessness radiated throughout my body as I sat naked on the side of the bed with my testicles dangling free. A few minutes passed and Painin was out of the bathroom, putting her clothes on.

‘Okay, you give money now. Two thousand baht.’

‘What are you talking about? Where are you going?’

‘I go work. You want see me again, you give money!’

‘What?’

‘Yes. You give money—NOW!’

‘Look, Painin,’ I said, knowing she wasn’t playing around, ‘I came to Laos because I wanted to be with you as your boyfriend, not your customer! I already told you I’ll try and help with money, but this is crazy! Why are you doing this? I love you.’

‘You think I like man? I not like any man. Many men want me, but I not care! You give two thousand baht or I break this,’ she said, picking up my guitar tuner and looking at me with sharpened eyes.

‘I can’t! It’s not right.’

Painin gave me one last look of disgust and threw my guitar tuner against the floor. It skidded towards the door and smashed against the wall.

‘You not give money, I tell police! I tell my friend come fight you.’

Tears began to well up as her face flushed. I held her eyes and pleaded with her to calm down.

‘Please, Painin,’ I whimpered. ‘I love you. I want to build a family with you. I want to help, but it can’t be like this ...’

‘Don’t say anything.’

She got to her feet and walked out, leaving the door open. My head spun, my heart danced. I sat on the corner of the bed with my head between my hands and stared across the room.

*Dumped ... first time in seven years.*

A strange constrictive pain tore away at my ribs. Tears splashed between my toes, soaking slow into the dirty wooden floor. I kept staring out the window. *That’s it ... the last time I’ll ever see her. FUCK! How could she dump me?*

I decided to get arseholed, pulled out my bag of aunty and fired it up on a freshly punctured can bong. Gorgeous grey smoke raced down my gullet and sat inside my lungs. When I was good and ready, I pushed it out against the closed window and watched it cloud over my pathetic reflection.

\* \* \*

The guy behind the reception desk was happy to let me change to another room. I threw my bag inside and walked into the street.

### **About the author:**

Brenton Rossow is the lead singer of The Folding Chairs. His work has been published in *Thieves Jargon*, *Parameter Magazine*, *Barrel House*, *Dogzplot*, *Decomp Mag*, *Jerseyworks*, *Flutter*, *Zygote in My Coffee*, *Nefarious Ballerina*, *Unlikely 2.0*, *Cha*, *The New Writer*, *Weyfarers*, *Qwerty* and *Indigo Journal* among others.

# Big Love

Chris Mooney-Singh, South Korea

And so I was left there sitting opposite June. ‘Well, this is strangest business trip I’ve been on,’ I said.

‘I told you Gerald, you are on holiday. Don’t worry. Mr Wang will sign your paperwork before you leave.’

‘What do you know about my paperwork?’ I queried.

‘He makes. You buy. Right? Look, I don’t know, Gerald. Mr Wang has many business interests all over Asia. But I have known Mr Wang for a long time and known how he works with people. This is his style when he likes someone. He likes you.’

I must admit I had felt flattered or relieved hearing that, but still I still had my distrusting Singaporean guard up.

Instead I said, ‘Hmmm ... really.’

‘Look, Gerald, relax! Enjoy yourself. Is that so hard?’ she laughed this time with a feeling of tired wisdom. ‘Look, I will tell you straight, Gerald. Mr Wang has been good to me over the years. Yes, there is love there, but he also lets me be myself. I am *haenyo*, after all, under all this lard.’ She laughed more freely, then reached across and squeezed my hand, asking, ‘Gerald, tell me the truth. So do you like me a little bit? Or am I just the boss’ fat girl you have to spend some time with?’

The more I had seen of June, the more I found her smart, refreshing and quite unpretentious. Perhaps not being a typical 'sex-goddess' in society's eyes had made someone like June come from a more sincere place. She had the gift of putting people at ease and was least concerned about herself. There was humility and loveliness in that. After seeing those hefty women divers, she had also taken on a new aura of big woman status in my mind also, a kind I had not allowed myself to appreciate before.

'You have a lovely face, a lovely nature, June. And I saw how much effort you put into making Mr Wang happy. Alright, you are full-size, but only a large body could house such a big heart,' and I squeezed her hand back.

'Oh, you're sweet!' And with that, she lunged forward, grabbing me by each cheek with the flats of her strong hands and pulled me directly into the soft vastness of her bosom, kissing me wet on the lips. Then, the slippery muscle of her tongue deftly searched inside for my mine, which she located with loving ease, eager to coax, tame and relax it. I felt myself slipping under waves and being dragged by the current into the weedy depths.

But then, I pulled back, remembering who and where I was. This was all a bit too sudden. My God! I was a married man, an unhappy one, yet still married. So, I withdrew, crabwise, my heart still beating forward toward her.

'You're shy.' She laughed. 'Don't worry. This is my nature. I am very friendly. By the way, Mr Wang and I noticed you haven't been eating. You don't seem to like Korean food much, so he wants me to cook for you tonight.'

'No, no, no, no. Please don't trouble yourself. I'm fine. Really.'

'I can't let you go hungry.'

'Really, I don't eat a lot. I work out at the gym with my wi—'

'Your wife? Is she skinny or big like me?'

I realized, I had opened up an area best not gone into.



‘Well, she’s slim, I guess. A bit obsessed, actually.’

She sensed my discomfort again. ‘Don’t worry, Gerald. I am not going to come chasing after you to Singapore. What happens in Jeju, stays in Jeju. Just relax.’ Again she disarmed me with that fresh, chubby smile.

‘Look, if I don’t follow Mr Wang’s instructions and cook for you, I might lose my job. Would you want that?’

‘No. Of course not.’

‘Fine then. Glad we got that out of the way!’

‘But ...’

‘Shssh ... look, I have to rush now and arrange for Mr Wang and his guests. He doesn’t like it when instructions are not followed closely. I’ll be back. Just sit tight. Enjoy. Put on the limo TV, have another beer. Oh, and by the way, I’m thinking pasta. I make good pasta.’

‘Yes, but ...’

‘No buts!’ she admonished me firmly, shaking her finger in a friendly way. ‘I’ll be right back. Don’t go anywhere.’

She spoke something in Korean to the driver over the phone intercom, got out, then strode forcefully into the hotel.

\* \* \*

I hadn’t expected this. I now remembered again how dumbfounded and totally stupid I had felt. At such times, fear and doubt prey on the mind. You question everyone’s intentions. I had wondered what Wang was up to. He had nothing to gain from me. I needed *his* business, not the other way around. Truly, it was very odd. I had never met such a strange entrepreneur before in all the fifteen years of my working life. Why such generosity? No one does things for no reason. My suspicious Singapore brain was working overtime.

Who in their right mind would be doing all this for me?

But the more I asked, the more I found that I had no real logical answers. Putting the pieces together, I saw that June had clearly been Wang's employee in the hotel and casino. Was he the silent owner? Why hadn't he let on and how had June come to be here as his aide de camp?

Yes, I had gotten myself into a real state, feeling impatient and upset, thinking that perhaps he was avoiding talking business because he was not going to give me the contract after all. Perhaps he was letting me down gently. I was booked to leave the very next day. Should I trust what June said—that he liked me and would definitely sign the deal? I sighed and really prayed that she was right.

Remembering all those fears and uncertain emotions while waiting in the limousine had made me resolve: *Hang it, Gerald. Stop being such a wimp. Just let things happen or you end up with an ulcer.* That's how I had slapped myself around for awhile sitting in this millionaire's long black piece of luxury on four wheels, parked outside a huge hotel with its own flashing casino in the basement. Thus, I had reached for another Hite beer from the car-bar, switched to the other seat, pressed the console button that opened a compartment to a mini limo TV and channel-surfed: a children's game show with the host dressed like a bear, a Korean cooking segment of the news with a local personality. I then sunk down in the seat with some dated Hollywood action flick dubbed in Korean with the ads scrolled along the bottom of the screen in block-character Korean, gulping my beer. It only took a moment and I began to feel drowsy. Yes, it was true I had hardly eaten a thing that day, starting with a disturbed breakfast and now the beer was going straight to my head. My eyelids and head began to droop.

I don't know how long I nodded off for, but as the limo door opened I sat up, startled to see her back. This time, she plonked herself down with a heavy

bounce next to me, closed the door, gave instructions to the driver through the intercom and then looked directly into my eyes, as if knowing that I was feeling awkward and uncomfortable. She took my head very gently like a baby and rested me on her ample bosom.

‘There, relax,’ she said in a very soothing voice as she stroked my hair. As if going under hypnosis, I just followed instructions and let my last guard drop.

I must have gone straight to sleep again. When I woke up, I was brought to consciousness by June’s voice:

‘Here we go.’

She was easing me out of the cab, up stairs, into a lift, supporting me with her strong ample body that was like a soft vertical sofa. Was I leaning up or lying down? I couldn’t tell. The chime of the lift bell startled me.

‘Where am I?’

‘Home,’ she said, sliding a key into the lock and bouncing back the door with her sneaker as she navigated me inside. The light went on and I saw a comfortable apartment with a white, U+-shaped sofa that looked vaguely familiar.

She deposited me there. I put my phone on the coffee table.

‘There, Baby. Give me a moment.’

Directly in front was a huge aquarium with all kinds of colourful fish, rocks and weed waving in the electro-generated current. Yes, I thought, this was just about right for the home of a *haenyo*.

June came back from the bedroom or wherever and bounced herself down beside me with a towel and bathrobe.

‘Here. Go take a shower. You’ll feel much better.’ And then kissed me again, hugging me close to the warm and abundant coastline of herself. This time, I responded with my tongue. She allowed me to explore her mouth and,

then broke off.

‘Ah we are now waking up, are we?’ And with that, kissed me again with a quick smacking sound, rousing and pushing me off in the direction of the bathroom.’

‘Go on!’

I went in, closed the door, undressed, relieved myself and then lingered under the hot water and let my thoughts drift for quite a while. Yes, I was definitely in the hands of a big, loving woman. I heard her voice echoing in my mind: *Just relax*. One sucking kiss had brought on my first penile wetness in the cab and now here, thinking of it under the water, I had become hard. I tried to control myself with neutral thoughts and, fearing that I would come then and there, I got out of the shower, towelled myself dry and put on the red bathrobe, tying it around the middle. I slicked back my wet hair with the comb from my back pocket, looked in the mirror, took a deep breath, then returned to the living room.

She had dimmed the lighting and some jazz was playing on the DVD player. I took my position again on the couch. There were cooking smells coming from the kitchen area that formed one side of the living room separated by a bench and bar stools. I smelled boiling water, salt, herbs and tomatoes and there was the sound of chopping. I didn’t look over my shoulder. I had decided to let things unfold and accept whatever dish of experience was offered.

‘Feeling better?’

‘Tremendous,’ I said lounging back into the sofa.

‘Almost ready,’ she said. I heard the ping of a microwave and also the opening and closing of a fridge door. In a moment she was coming to join me, humming something in Korean to herself, holding a tray: on it were three small white bottles and two small ceramic cups. There were also various

pickles, seaweeds and something hot—pancake squares with all kinds of vegetables cooked into them. She must have had a supply and quickly microwaved them. There was also a kimchi for good measure, which still smelled like detergent. Some things one never gets used to. She poured with the right hand, while holding the elbow with her left, then passed me the bottle. The liquor was milky-white.

‘Now you pour for me,’ she said. Being left-handed, I transferred the plastic bottle.

‘No, no. The Korean way,’ she said, re-positioning it in my right with my left just below the elbow as she had done. It seemed strange, but seeing that I had decided to surrender to whatever came, I accepted her direction and filled her cup.

‘We always pour for each other. It is polite.’

‘That’s nice,’ I said.

Now she picked up her wine cup with two hands, nodding for me to do the same.

‘Both poised and ready, she said ‘One shot!’ indicating for us to down our drinks at the same time.

The drink was both sweet and sour, almost rough and raw and she was quickly refilling for me, and I for her.

‘This is really nice,’ I said, ‘the best thing I’ve tried in Korea, by far.’

‘Makgeolli was a farmer’s drink. It’s beer. Made from mixed grains and fermented; it gives *strength*,’ She laughed, I guess wondering whether I got her joke. ‘Ah, you just need a good guide.’

‘Thankfully, I have found one,’ and looked straight at her.

‘Yes, you have,’ she giggled. ‘Okay, now we play!’

With that, she deftly undid the soft belt around my bathrobe and found my penis, already hardening in her chubby little palms. Then she kneeled

between my legs and took me in her mouth, working my shaft into the mollusk of her mouth, bringing her tongue to bear, on occasion, from root to cock-head; and soon she changed her strategy of arousal by putting the whole of my scrotal sac into her mouth and rolling the testicles around like small, hard-boiled eggs.

‘Mmmm,’ she said and then worked me harder and faster. Already aroused from the shower, I couldn’t hold myself back any longer and came prematurely with a loud release, jetting my load between her lips.

‘Mmmm,’ I heard her say again, sitting up now before me and swilling my viscous whiteness around in her mouth, giggling and making eyes at me, letting some dribble out the side and then playfully pushing it back in with a finger. Then, without swallowing, she put her powerful arms around my neck and kissed me with the mouth full of my own cum. The residue of the white rice beer in my mouth merged with that taste of semen. I had never tried anything like this before. It was indescribable. My wife, Pearl Lin, would have died of shock.

June passed the load into my mouth and followed with her tongue sucking it back and forth, giving and taking, giving and taking—her pink tongue moving like a sea worm in our salty current. It grew in volume with our saliva, the full flavour of those two white essences perfectly matched and mixed now into one white cocktail of human sugars and acids. Then, with the same trademark deftness, she sucked my ejaculate back into her mouth, took ownership of it, so to speak, withdrew from my lips and swallowed it down with a satisfying release.

‘Ahhhhh,’ she said licking her lips and fingers. ‘Thanks for the vitamin pill. So nice. Now you know the secret of my young complexion,’ she laughed. ‘This is June’s own special technique for drinking Korean rice beer,’ she said with a slutty twinkle in her eye. ‘You like?’

‘I like. That was awesome. Come back here!’ With that I grabbed, but despite her dimensions, she had easily out-manoeuvred me to the side of the sofa and was now pouring me another cup of the milky beer. I took her cue and did the same for her.

‘One shot!’ We both said, and holding each cup with two hands, drained our drinks.

‘Now I must check on dinner and I will take my little shower. Okay?’

‘Sure. Please.’

Yes, I was in the hands of a big Korean sea-nymph who was kind, creative and sexier than I could ever imagine. After the entrée, I wondered what was coming next.

The jazz played on in the background and it seemed that the fish in the aquarium were swimming in sequence to the beat, now turning this way, flashing another direction on cue. Despite the violation of etiquette, I poured myself another cup of rice beer and even picked at the side dishes, trying the pancake slices. *Yes, kind of like a Korean pizza*, I thought, and munched happily on one. I even tried a forkful of the black seaweed and a cube or two of pickled turnip. Downed with the rice beer, they weren’t too bad. In fact, they complemented each other. But I still steered clear of the kimchi.

The fish continued their technicolour routines in the aquarium and now I looked around and saw a painting on the wall. It was a portrait of the old *haenyo*.

Wang and June had brought me to see these famous women divers along the Jeju coastline earlier in the day. Her mother had been a diver, and June herself had imbibed from a young age that same trait of fierce independence of the *haenyo*, who didn’t rely on husbands to earn a living. I thought this was most unusual in an Asian culture; certainly different from my Singapore upbringing.

I got up to study more closely: Two women were sitting on the rocks. The grandma in the blue one-piece was smoking a cigarette, the other had a white cloth around her loins and was stretching and scratching the back of her head with her magnificent breasts and orange-tipped nipples exposed to the afternoon sunlight. In the background, you could see the green-mesh trap with its orange float and a small trident used to loosen shellfish from underwater cracks and crevices.

They were coarse, Rubenesque, heavy jowled, with almost bulbous red clown noses. Perhaps this was the result of prolonged cold water diving and holding your breath at depth. I looked at the right bottom corner of the painting. There was a name or inscription written in Korean and a date: 1956.

I couldn't help myself, so I found my phone and took a picture of the painting. It was so beautiful, and June Park could be found in every centimetre of it.

I felt as if I was swimming in the sea and moved and swayed in time with the jazz and the fish, until the next pleasant surprise of the evening: June had bathed and there she was dressed in traditional Korean red-and-white costume with her hair made up. I had seen photos of this courtly garb before, but had not realized that it really was a 'fat' dress. The red blouse at the top came up just under her breast-line and the skirt fanned out conically below into a wide circumference touching the floor.

'Wow, June!'

She giggled and moved as if on invisible dolly-wheels in my direction.

'Let me take your picture,' I said, positioning and snapping her from various angles and in different poses—some serious, some girly, some comical, some down and dirty. She was so connected to her feelings that she was a natural model. I took some near the back-lit lampshade, another in the bedroom doorway, one looking out the high-rise window and others near the



colourfully lit aquarium.

‘What can I say? This dress ... It’s so ... you, June!’

‘So now, Mr Singapore, this is my present—gift-wrapped in my traditional Korean *hang-bok*. Am I pretty?’

‘Pretty? You are gorgeous!’ and I meant it. She had really brought me to that point of appreciation for unpretentious pleasure and a belief in the importance of living lustfully in the moment. We joined lips and embraced for a long time with the oxygen filter gurgling in the background.

Primed and confident, I now felt it was my turn to give and not just receive. I was ready to fold back her inner sound of fabric and started by running my hands down her red-necked blouse over its breast-points, so elegantly and classically tailored with all the grace-lines of Korean history and ceremony intact. Then, I knelt to find her hidden ankles and kissed them.

She then helped by turning around and bending over, spread legs wide, while gripping the back of the sofa seat. She knew what she wanted. I put my hands underneath and lifted outer silk and inner petticoat, finding fleshy hand-holds and wet dew trickling down the inside of her thighs. I was soon rubbing my two palms up warm flesh and feasting my eyes on the curvature of her dimpled buttocks, scored with life-accumulated cellulite as if they were star-indentations of real experience and accomplishment, not the bane of some prurient weight-watcher’s programme. Yes, she was most un-Hollywood, an unabashedly dimpled daughter of the sea, a traveller’s insulation against cold days and lonely nights. She was ever-prepared for picnic or camper fun, carrying like a small jumbo—her own howdah of excess baggage.

In the overwhelming presence of Big, I wondered why thin was so sought after today? I now realized how more comfortable it was to ride a fleshy she-mammal, rather than fearing you might crush some bony sea-horse with an exposed skeleton, like Pearl Lin.

But it wasn't just about size or dimension. Desire was clearly a set of guided responses, manufactured and cultivated by aesthetics that differed from place to place around the globe and were also different during other periods of history. The ample body of June Park from Jeju-do now made me realize that life was meant to be big, broad-minded and ever-generous, not skinny, calculating and mean-hearted.

She bent over more to let me moisten her crevice with saliva, yet there was no need. She had already thoughtfully applied lubricant and I found myself hardening again, ready to caress the rosy petals of this Everywoman's lower mouth.

Instinctive as a diver, I entered carefully, my member raised like a shellfish trident, the tool used to prise loose the pearl of an arching clitoris. I fitted and rode her standing, working the hump-backed mammal into deep water, riding the wave of our lust without fear of failing, until I came to the precipice of climax and withdrew, controlling myself a little, then flipping her over like the underside of a ribbed crayfish. Her silk-dressed back now skewered gently to the top of the sofa chair, I opened her legs gently again, exploring wet loins up to her waist with hands carefully spreading the silk and petticoat cotton. Then, down-kneeling, I kissed and tongued the red anemone within that sea-crevice, finding her taste as authentic as the brine of the sea.

I stood and entered again, from the front now, looking into her eyes which met mine equally and with happiness as I thrust again and again, fully fountaining, releasing my milky beer and merging guttural *yeses* with the reciprocal moans she was uttering.

If a man has limits, these are not found in a woman who can still ache on for an interminable time, imploring her diver to go deeper and deeper. I tried and tried and then failed happily, until there was nothing left of my white blow to eke out for either of us. Spent, I lay across her like an octopus, limp

on a hoard of sea-catch, joined to the mother-lode and a larger sense of the globe than what I had previously allowed myself to experience. As I came back to consciousness, I felt her arms like soft feelers at my back. The lit aquarium continued to gurgle and the fish schools did their jazz-jive to DVD music in the background.

‘June. I feel incredible.’ We came back to the couch.

‘This *hang-bok* was my mother’s,’ she said. It’s special. I don’t really wear it much. It’s mainly for special occasions, but tonight I wanted to wear it for you. Even Wang hasn’t seen it.’

I felt special. ‘I will always treasure this,’ I said. Then she poured me more Mokgeolli. I now realized why this ritual was done with the right hand holding the bottle and left hand on the elbow. This was clearly to make sure the *hang-bok*’s sleeve didn’t drip into the wine cup.

‘Actually, it is a bit old and delicate. I never made love with it on before. I thought it would be a fun idea, something a sensitive man like you would appreciate. But let me go and take it off now. Okay?’

With that, she disappeared into the bedroom. I sat there feeling pleased with myself so I took another slice of the pizza-pancake and washed it down with wine.

Soon she was back wearing a matching bathrobe. ‘You must be hungry’ she said. I nodded, but to tell the truth, I was fully satiated on a deeper level. It didn’t matter now whether or not I ate food.

‘Let me finish the pasta.’ She did her work quite quickly and allowed me to mind-drift for a while.

‘Hey, I recognize this furniture. Is it from Wang’s warehouse?’

‘Yes, it is. A gift.’ She didn’t say more.

Before long, she had brought two steaming mountains of curlicue pasta with sauce, made room on the table and then proceeded to put the first few

forkfuls into my mouth. After getting me lovingly started, she proceeded with her own and began to eat with concentration. We didn't talk, but she looked up from time to time to smile at me.

Dinner done, I tried to get up and clear the plates, but she shook her head. 'Leave them,' and dumped mine on top of hers at the end of the coffee-table.

'Let's drink,' she said. We poured again for each other, said 'One shot' and downed our cups ... again and again.

From then on, we passed the night hardly speaking but nestled together in our matching robes, watching the dance of the pretty fish and becoming tipsier and tipsier until I passed out on her shoulder.

I woke mid-morning and found myself nestled nakedly against an equally naked mountain. She had somehow transferred me to her bed and she was still snoring lightly beside me. I pulled back the sheet and looked at the whole side of her bulging body. She looked beautiful, still.

Beauty, I thought, is just a mental construction of emotions felt for its object. Beauty shifts and changes like weather, according to the eye of the beholder. Beauty is electricity lighting the lamp and illuminating the fish tank. I would never be able to think of a fat person in the old light again, I realized, and ran my hand over her rump to reassure myself that this realization was indeed real and would last.

The touch of my hand climbing up and down June's sleeping coastline began to tickle her and, suddenly, she woke with a start.

'Oh, Gerald, are you still here? What happened? What time is it?'

'I think we've overslept.' There was a digital alarm clock on my side of the bed. 'It's 11.45.'

'What? Mr Wang will kill me! What time is your flight?'

'One-thirty,' I answered.

‘Hurry up. Get dressed. We must go to the hotel and pack your things.’

‘Don’t worry,’ I said, ‘I could stay on a day longer.’

‘No, no. You cannot. Mr Wang is not available. You must get up. We have to get your papers signed, remember?’

Conscience struck. ‘Oh yes, the contract. I had completely forgotten that.’

‘Quick now. Jump in the shower.’ Reluctantly I obeyed orders, showered and shaved when I saw an electric razor there, and then splashed on some cologne from June’s shelf.

#### **About the author:**

Chris Mooney-Singh is a full-time writer, publisher and literary worker. The recipient of several grants from Singapore’s National Arts Council, he has travelled to many international festivals and events. Mooney-Singh co-edited *The Penguin Book of Christmas Poems* (Penguin Books Australia) and his last two books were *The Taxi Buddha Cab Company* and *The Bearded Chameleon*. Recently returned to play and fiction writing, four of his short stories were featured in *Best of Singapore Erotica, Love and Lust in Singapore* and *Crime Scene: Singapore* published by Monsoon Books. Chris Mooney-Singh continues to write longish short fiction and his new book of poems *The Bearded Chameleon* was recently released in Singapore and Australia.

# Aphrodite

Suzanna Kusuma, Indonesia

## *Scene 1: Sunset*

Under corrugated roofs, silky bed sheets, her whispers and sounds are carried off in the hiss of traffic from nightfall towards dawn. Sun falls.

With it, streaks of fog lurk and hover over quiet alleyways. Mice skitter around plundering morsels of leftovers. The wasted moon overlooks. A drooping silent witness to the frolics ... A watchful tower to the jealousies and rivalries spurred by her whimsical gestures that entice and provoke men who find in her both the goddess they worship and the witch they would torture and kill.

*Kali Jodoh* is rows of unlicensed shag houses along the heavily polluted Ciliwung River, somewhere in West Jakarta district. The river stench mingled with cheap alcohol lures bystanders and travellers alike. Curiously drawn to the bright yellow spots of kerosene lamps burning through gaps of asymmetrical doors (invitingly loose and fragile), motorcyclists buzz in and out of the alleyways while quietly picking up and dropping off passengers. Further into the alley, in some hidden nooks and corners, are glimpsed silhouettes of luxury cars which at the sign of dawn would swerve quietly away, leaving their spots empty for food peddlers. It is also not uncommon to find police cars among these luxury cars.

The dense flow and murmur of old Ciliwung River permeates the night. And as the moon wanes, the inhabitants of *Kali Jodoh* ready themselves for the judgment of daylight bursting through.

### ***Scene 2: Domesticated***

At night, he seeks the woman who tantalizes his cock with her tongue. He likes to fix his gaze to the clouds as she makes her way up and down, up and down.

His children call him ‘daddy’ the way Americans do to sweet, doting fathers. He bought them a puppy one occasion-less day, despite his wife’s approval of pets. He had come thrice inside her mouth that day. They named him Bruno.

He convinced his wife his wife children should learn the blessings of having other living creatures to add on to the joy of living. The same night he made love to his wife and unselfishly took him time waiting for her orgasm while all along reliving the memories of the tongue teasing, and teasing, and teasing. His explosions rapidly approach as her swift, unyielding embrace commands. He has nowhere to go, nowhere to be, but inside her.

### ***Scene 3: Conquest***

Soft undulations of mountains and valleys he caresses with his bare hands every day. His eyes are not as privileged as his hands—though you can argue such is his privilege. More importantly, however, is his gift of subtlety. He is quite used to women who are liars—when asked if they are comfortable, they say, ‘Oh yes, perfectly’, with their arms and legs pressed tightly on the side as though they were fitting into a tube. He would then cover them over with a piece of silk and let the slippery flow of the fabric persuade them to be just as airy and slacken their rigid pose. Soft feather works beautifully, too, for the

more glamorous sort who are not ticklish and enjoy the voluptuous teasing.

He communicates mainly by touching. While his fingers massage, he listens to the skin as it contracts ... softens ... relaxes ... opens ... widens ... quivers ... twitches ... jerks ... and he responds to them appropriately, as attentive lover- devotees do. The shyest and most rigid in turn relinquish their defensive armor: unhook their bras, wiggle down their panties, untie their hair knot. Not surprisingly, they feel liberated in consequence.

Lying naked on the futon, his blindness emboldens them temporarily before they re-emerge in the outside world fully clothed and prim. Women such as these are usually his regular customers.

Desire is a thing disguised in various forms. He delights greatly in the hunt. Usually this means he needs to probe in so many ways under equally many pretexts. It is the fact that he sees with his hands that he would go beyond the border—climbing up on the mounds, delving deep into the folds—and is excused for it. He is not worried about trespassing. His main concern is the period of time he's allowed within.

The moment he trespasses, every gesture and movement is critical. His touch needs to feign innocence (for how could he be excused otherwise?), but yet be calculated to catch it unguarded. He strives to stay, to linger, and to score. The 'game of hide-and-seek', he likes to call it.

A sharp intake of breath followed by a sigh, a groan—he wills and coaxes desire out of its cave. Behold the beautiful beast being exposed, reacting like a gnarling tigress, a strutting peacock, a bewildered dove, a hissing snake, a fiery lioness ...

To each, he bestows a distinctive name wherein his victory is marked. He selects these names with utmost care, for they represent that one moment of release and potential, never to be repeated. He is a proud keeper of these names—their ultimate sole guardian.



Little do the ladies of Jakarta's most elite class know that the blind masseur they frequent regularly in one of Kemang's exclusive spas (known and open to selected members only) is a father of three children and a respected member of his village near Malang—a man known for his quiet, elegant demure, eloquence and not insignificant contribution to the local projects (irrigation, mosques, schools) in the village and neighbouring regions.

#### ***Scene 4: Possession***

Sometimes I really ask too much of you. I want to breathe you, I want to smile you, I want to linger you. It's the sweetness of love that I lick and suck till the juices run dry. (They never do run dry, and I don't ever get enough of you). You must be exhausted by me. I'm sorry for that.

I'm all yours completely and entirely—I like to say it though I don't know what that means. I like the sound of it. I like the idea of it. I like the idea of you. And me. Being us.

Some days, I feel you are not quite with me and that's when I scramble around fidgeting; what other things could you possibly have outside of me? Outside of us—don't really know what 'us' means, though I like to stress it. There's only us and more of us to come. It's an ancient thing, I know you would say, but so profound, isn't it—you and me becoming us?

I know I'm idiotic, but I really can't stand the idea of you not thinking of me, or not having me in your thoughts. How should that be allowed? I'm all yours completely and so are you mine. Just as we are one when we make love (how you embrace and grip me inside you!), why should it be any different when we are not in bed?

I don't like, I hate, how you lean towards a person as though at any time he can swoon you helplessly away. Don't you see my panic, my doom? I'm

frantic; I know you will say that. I know half the things you will say—don't you see how well I know you? I am you, I am you, I am you. Now you roll your eyes and look away, and I sigh deeply for I have lost you again.

'Let's go to Puncak?' No.

'Bandung?' No.

'Bali, Lombok, Medan?' No, No, No.

'Let's get married?' (Two scenarios. One: you bulge your eyes at me and walk away, I run after you, pretend I haven't said anything. Two: you laugh and say 'Sure', I quickly get on my knees, kneel and kiss you all over.)

Only instead: 'Let's catch a movie at Plaza Indonesia?' and you let me grab your hand and lead you along.

Tomorrow, surely, you will be more mine than today.

### ***Scene 5: The Sea***

Once upon a time there lived a village in the Indo-Malay region who worshipped the Sea. The latter, with its tempestuous mood swings, is a vast forbidding presence to the villagers who cower themselves away upon seeing a sheer flash of lightning in its horizon. Trembling, they would cover their heads, shut their eyes tight, mutter prayers and chants. It is not obvious what it is of the Sea that they fear, for they settle quite a distance away from the coast and they certainly don't rely on it for their living. They are neither swimmers nor fishermen.

But for every little disaster that falls upon them, it is the image of the Sea's silvery claws crawling underneath and its thundering wrath that shake their conscience and make them kneel for forgiveness—though it is not apparent what misdeeds they have done to earn this reprimand.

Once the Sea stole upon them and took their animals, children, elders and weak ones. Convinced it was the end of their days, they waited for the

Sea to sweep their remaining lot away.

Weeks and months passed without work, without sleep. But the Sea remained calm and unaffected. Coupled with clear blue skies twinkling shine on its undulating surface, it seemed content and pleased even.

Observing this agreeable mood, it was then agreed among the villagers that what they needed to do was offer gifts to the Sea. It was also agreed that it should be done at each complete cycle of the moon. With this resolution, the villagers recommenced their daily routine, taking comfort from the ritual sacrifices they communally made to the Sea.

On a slab of rock beaten by waves, kneeling over the sprawled lifeless body, he caressed and admired the soft features of her nose, mouth and cheeks. His palms pressed on her breasts, then her belly, futilely stroking and massaging them. As he entered her, he met his face with hers turned everlastingly silent towards the sea and whispered in his native tongue his desire and worship of her. He stayed with her till dusk fell, when he had to continue on with his journey southwards to his people.

She blinked to a ray of sunlight resting on her wet eyelids. Quietness surrounded her. For a long while, she lay, unknown to herself if she were living or dead. Gradually, she heard sounds coming from the Sea and felt the wind on her cheeks. She was soon awakened to her arms, limbs, hands and feet. The entire weight of her body came to her. Feeling cold, weak and thirsty, she finally gathered herself up and treaded her way slowly towards the island.

It was her mother who first saw and quickly covered her naked body with a large piece of cloth. The night she was to be given to the Sea, she had said goodbye to her only daughter. The woman she now saw was not her daughter. She knew this as she led her into the house and rested her in her daughter's bed. The next day she was presented to the villagers who gazed at

her with wonder and awe. Not a few thought of her as the incarnated goddess of the Sea or, if that's too big a thought, at least as the one chosen and favored by the Sea—but to what purpose they were not sure. She was feared and admired all at once.

Months passed. The woman who was her mother continued to care for her until it became clear to the villagers that a child of the Sea was to be expected.

They built a tall house for her to live with her son, with an altar erected at the front terrace for the villagers to offer prayers and sacrifices. She chose its location, on a steep cliff jutting outwards to the Sea. Every day, mother and son would climb down the cliff to the shore. Her son was nurtured by the Sea and grew from the Sea. They shared and taught what they knew to the villagers, who remained timid but, all the same, curious. Eventually, many of them learned to swim and, with their fine carpentry skills, built rafts and boats to venture further into the Sea. In no time, the entire village was converted to swimmers and fishermen who no longer trembled before the Sea, but embraced her moods along with the riches she yielded.

Some nights lit by the full moon, the woman would be seen on the shore with her knees bent and spread wide apart. Waves, one after another, lapped in and out, over her legs, thighs and belly, as she hums her song of gratitude, homage and desire for her ethereal lover.

On these nights, many women lose virginity to their pining lovers and many widows seek comfort from friends and strangers alike. And the sounds coming from the Sea gently rock and cradle the villagers to sleep.

**About the author:**

Suzanna Kusuma is Indonesia-born Chinese writer currently based in

Singapore. She studied English Literature and Philosophy at University of Melbourne (Australia) and Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam (Netherlands). She writes mainly poetry and other creative pieces, experimenting with different forms of presentation and languages. This is her first piece on erotica.

# The Phoenix Tattoos

Richard Lord, Singapore

It was probably because he was at Spinelli's that day. He was really a Coffee Bean person. His drink was cappuccino, and neither Spinelli's nor Starbucks has the right cup for cappuccino. Their cups are all tall and thin, so you get all the milk and foam at once and only reach the coffee when you near the end of your drink.

For that reason alone, he rarely went to Spinelli's. And, deeply addicted to habit, he hated altering his routine. Strange, unwelcome things often happened to him when he broke routine. Which may be why on that day, having gone to Spinelli's for his cappuccino, he had that "episode."

While manoeuvring the cup so that he could draw a good swallow of coffee along with the thick clouds of foam, he happened to look over and noticed her. She was pretty, of course, but so were many of the other girls sitting there, or walking by, some much prettier. But his eyes locked on this one. Wait a minute, wasn't she ...? No, that wasn't her, but ... suddenly, it came back to him, at least a part of it. That one time. The two of them together, and fantastic sex.

He couldn't remember her name, or where he had met her, even where they had gone to make love ... well, have sex. It couldn't really have been love. It was more like ... Like?

No, none of that came back to him; but the lovemaking was indelibly printed on his brain. As he gazed at her across the room, he recalled that so pale body, every lovely contour: the smallish but well-shaped breasts, the low sweep of her back proceeding up in a gentle slope to her buttocks, the dark wedge of hair between her thighs.

Just as he started considering that it might have been simply a dream that this girl had turned up in—maybe he had once seen her on the street or in a mall and his flash craving for her returned in a dream—she looked up. The expression on her face, stunned and bitterness together, told him it was not just a dream; she *had* been there, wherever it was. His eyes and brow scrunched up, as if to ask her where they knew each other from. But she instantly turned away, looked around for another table and, not finding one in the crowded café, simply pivoted her chair so her back was to him.

He kept staring, however, and on seeing her back, that other key detail suddenly flashed. Yes, how could he have ever forgotten that? The phoenix tattoo, double-headed, there on the small of her back, on the left side. Hypnotic. In such vibrant colours it seemed to be dancing slowly in its flames, even as she lay absolutely still. And it had an identical twin on the crown of her right breast.

Yes, the two tattoos. The thing was, they weren't just adornments: they played such an important role in their lovemaking. By just pressing them, he could make her instantly aroused, or intensify the pleasure. On that day—or evening, or whenever—when they had been together, he would lean forward during the coupling and kiss the tattoo on her breast while gently pressing the other on her back. She'd start to climax, and he would press harder on the one tattoo while kissing the breast tattoo more intensely. She would come, screaming, digging the blunt side of her fingers into his neck, then drag them down his back, pull at his hair with her teeth, maybe bite his neck or ear as he

lifted his head from her breast.

All of this he could remember so acutely. Yet nothing else.

She was waiting for someone, a friend apparently, and that second girl arrived within minutes. She must have told this friend about the episode, because after a short, heads-lowered exchange, the friend looked up and floated him a dirty look. Hell, he must have done something terrible at the time—but he hadn't the slightest inkling of what it was.

He couldn't keep from staring over at them, so he edged his chair sideways, in the other direction, and tried to busy himself. But this whole thing was beginning to gnaw further inside him, upsetting the carefully arranged furniture of habit and planning. Nothing like this had ever happened to him, that some details of such an incident remained so vivid—he could see, hear, even taste them right there—and that he completely forgot other details at least as important.

He pulled out a notebook, found a clean page and started sketching the tattoo. As he drew, he recalled how just kissing the tattoo on her lower back had brought her to fierce arousal, how her legs would thrash and her butt gyrate as he kissed her there again and again, his lips and tongue pressing into her pliant flesh.

He pulled out a red pen to add more colour, more “activity” to his drawing. He only had the black and the red, while the tattoos themselves flaunted other rich colours: ochre, green, gold, purple ... one he couldn't even name. But he was able to come up with a good facsimile, considering his meagre materials. He smiled: yeah, not at all bad. Maybe he should have listened to less practical people and gone into graphic art instead of law. He would certainly not have made as much money as he did now, but he might actually be happier.

When he finished, he turned back and looked over to their table. They



were still talking, this time ignoring him. He added a few last strokes to the drawing; yes, that's pretty close to the way it looked. He glanced over at them again. Even from this angle, he could see how alluring the girl was. The way her shift pulled against her body as she sat in the chair made him think of that same body naked, writhing there in the bed against the moist, pink sheets. Wherever it had taken place.

He closed the notebook, finished his cappuccino in one long gulp and thought of just leaving, taking a wide turn away from them as he exited. Almost immediately, however, he realised this was impossible. How could he walk away from this woman with whom he had apparently shared something incredible, yet lost so much of. He *had to* find out what this was all about, or at least make more of an attempt than that feeble questioning look he had thrown her.

He pulled out the notebook again, carefully tore out the page with the drawing, rose and moved quickly over to their table. The friend looked up first; the girl herself gave him just a cursory glance, turned, looked down and started twisting the edges of a serviette into tiny cones. "Could you please get out of here? We're having a conversation, in case you didn't notice."

"Actually, I did notice," he replied. "But I wanted to give you something." He placed the drawing down on the table, right in front of the girl. Her friend looked puzzled. The girl turned to her friend and said something in a soft voice; he tried, but was unable to make out more than a few words. The friend nodded, stood up, started moving away. About a metre from the table, she spun around and pointed to her watch.

"Fifteen minutes," the girl said, shaking her head, then turned back to him. "Okay, you can sit down if you like." He nodded, pulled out the nearest chair to hers and started to slide it a little closer. "Not there," she snapped. "Take that one," pointing to the chair on the opposite side of the table. He

shrugged and settled himself into that seat.

She picked up the drawing and stared at it. Her face indicated that she was impressed. "That's your tattoo, isn't it?" She nodded. "You have it here," he pointed to the spot on his own back; she nodded again. "And the other one ... higher up, on the other side."

She looked at him fully for the first time since she had first spotted him. "Yes, so what?"

He shifted uneasily, but allowed himself to place his hands on the table.

"Do you know who I am?" He tried to control his voice, to sound calm, but a slight note of desperation slipped in.

"Of course. What do you think, that I'd forget something like that? Shit, you have an even lower opinion of me than I thought."

"No, no, it's not that, it's just ... Alright, now how can I explain this?" He searched for the next path to follow. "Do you know my name?"

She snorted out a derisive laugh. "No, I don't. You didn't want to tell me, remember? You said, 'Just call me David Beckham.'"

"No, I don't remember, that's the problem. I just don't ... I mean, there are so many details there from that ... time together. So vivid up here." He pointed to his head. "But then so much I just can't recall."

"Like?"

"Like ... just your name. Did you tell me your name?"

"Of course, I did. I guess I was just too naïve back then. I trusted guys."

He felt a surge of free-floating guilt. Yes, he probably had treated her terribly. That may be why he was experiencing this bout of selective amnesia. He'd read somewhere how the brain often filters out things that are especially unpleasant, or that we're horribly ashamed of. A defence mechanism that helps us to move on. But what horrible thing could he have done? She didn't seem to bear any traces of physical damage. What could he have done to her

inside?

“*Any*-thing else?” She snapped his contemplation with the harshness of this question.

“Yeah: a lot else. Where did it happen? Here in Singapore? At your place, at the uni hostel, a friend’s? Or were we somewhere on holiday?”

She stung him with a look that said such an insulting question deserved only dire contempt. She turned, the bitter look still on her face, to check a message on her handphone. “I have to go,” she said icily without bothering to turn back to him.

But he couldn’t let it end there. “I’m sorry, but this has never happened to me before. Hey, I’m only twenty-seven. I usually get praised for my good memory. But I really can’t remember too much about that time we were ... together. Just the ... well, the mechanics really and ... your tattoos. Those tattoos were like some hypnotic medallions.”

“I see, so all you remember is the sex? Getting inside me, pumping like crazy, the stormy kisses, all that. Pushing all the right buttons, pulling all the right cords. Isn’t that what you guys call it?”

“Well, I also remember the colour of the sheets; they were pink, right? And that ugly bedside lamp ... then there was this thin rug which was a horrendous shade of green, and ...” He looked up; it had suddenly come back to him. “And you said you would take me the next day to where you got your tattoos.” She said nothing, didn’t nod, but her narrowed eyes told him he was right. “You said you wanted me to get two just like them. You said it was ... necessary, that it was part of our being together.”

“So you don’t forget everything. You have a good memory for what you want to remember.”

“I want to remember it all. I want to remember your name, where we were, why we were there, how we got that far ...” He stopped, suddenly

realising that he had swept past what could be the key to the whole episode. “And ... why didn’t I go and get the tattoos?”

Her eyes narrowed further, as if they were turning into small creatures—mythical beings, half-reptile, half-whatever—going into attack mode. He actually started to get scared, thinking she might be able to physically attack him, take revenge for some wrong that he couldn’t remember but deeply deserved to be punished for.

“The pact,” she whispered, and then smiled. The smile looked like it tasted of strychnine. But it seemed as if this was a taste she enjoyed.

Here, he closed his own eyes, tightly. For one thing, he didn’t want to see her face at this moment. But more importantly, he needed to dig deep within himself to recover what kind of pact they could have made. If it was still there, he would find it. Nothing. He opened his eyes again, slowly, half-believing she’d be gone when he looked. But she was still there, of course. However, the smile was gone; this time, there were tears trickling down her cheeks. As they reached her mouth, she opened it slightly and eased her tongue out. It seemed like she wanted to swallow them, to wash the acrid taste from her mouth.

“I’m sorry, I just can’t ... what *pact* was this?”

She closed her mouth tightly, her stare fixed on him, and the tears seemed to stop instantly. “Look, I’m *really* sorry if I’ve upset you. I didn’t mean that at all. I just wanted to ... to get the whole story on what happened there.”

“There’s no story,” she answered. “There’s just ways in and ways out.” She glanced again at her handphone, more as an excuse than to read any messages there. “I have to go.”

She stood, started pulling her shopping bags together, then turned slightly to grab something off the next chair. Only at that moment did the impulse seize him; he acted on it without hesitation. As she was turned slightly to the

right, he lunged over and touched the spot where he thought he remembered the tattoo being. He was, as it were, spot on. At the initial touch, she stiffened. As he pressed harder against her flesh, she gasped. Her face knotted in a look of unwanted arousal. But almost immediately, she recovered: she swung around, looking like she had just been bitten by a snake. The expression on her face now clearly warned she was quite ready to attack.

What the hell was he doing? He could be charged with outrage of modesty. He was a lawyer, he knew that. If convicted, he could be suspended from practicing law—for years maybe.

But being a lawyer, he also knew that he had a ready defence. He was just reaching out to flick something off her shift, there on the back. How did this constitute a sexual assault? To prove his guilt, she'd have to prove some offence was actually committed. Boy, would he love to see this in court: for her to stand up, expose the tattoo, have a deputy prosecutor touch the spot and watch her soar into instant ecstasy. The judge might even ask if he could touch it himself, just to be certain. He knew a few who would probably insist. He laughed at this notion.

Of course, she had no idea he was laughing at some imagined judge, not her. So when she slapped him hard and jolted the laugh from his face, he was not, as he could have been, riled. But he realised it was useless trying to explain the matter to her. He would just accept the slap as a down payment on what he probably deserved from her.

"A joke, is it? Everything's a joke for you." She clutched her bags again and looked ready to pivot and leave.

"No, it's not a joke, not at all. Look, stay just five more minutes. I'm ready to fulfill my side of the pact. But I don't remember what it is. Honestly." She looked at him hard, in a way he couldn't read. Was she trying to judge whether to believe him or not? Or was she waiting for the perfect

moment to do something awful to him, to gain what she must see as her justified revenge? “Honestly,” he repeated. “Honestly.” He shook his head in frustration, aware of how deeply dishonest the word “honestly” can sound.

Her features softened significantly. Had he reached her? Was she willing to listen to him, to give him back those parts of the story he was missing? Or was this just a trick to lull him before she struck again? She said nothing for about a minute, just stared at him; he felt like a cord was twisting inside him, slowly pulling his throat down further into his chest.

“No, I really have to go. I do.” She reached down, picked up a sheet of paper from the table, slightly torn at the top, coffee stains at one edge. She held it out to him. “This is yours.”

“No, you can keep it. It’s ... it’s a present.”

She smiled at him for the first time, a smile without the strychnine anyway. She then reached into her soft black bag, extracted a pen, and inscribed something on the sheet. She extended it to him once more. “Now it’s my present to you.” After a slight hesitation, he took the drawing back.

“I have to go.”

“Can you give me a number or something where I can contact you?”

“No. You can’t contact me.”

“Okay then, how about ... at least tell me where was it? Where did we? No, better, why are those tattoos so ... so powerful?”

She smiled again, more warmly this time, whispered, “It’s there,” turned and moved off quickly. He rose, but then just stood there, watching her go. Until she disappeared, he had almost forgotten that he was holding the drawing. He quickly looked to see what she had written. He read, “What you can touch is just the beginning of what you can feel.”

He frowned, then folded the sheet in half and slipped it into his wallet, next to the credit cards. “The beginning of what you can feel?” Well, he

should be able to work this one out. He was a lawyer after all, someone who used logic to herd and corral the irrational.

And what was that last thing she said? “It’s there?” What’s there? The secret of the tattoos, the place where they met, the reason she couldn’t tell him?

Hmm ... it was like his cappuccino, probably: at the bottom of all the foam, all the clouds, you eventually found what you were looking for. As she said, it’s there. And, somehow, he knew that it was.

#### **About the author:**

Richard Lord is obviously a pseudonym, but it has also appeared on 18 published books, as author or co-author. An aficionado of short-breathed fiction, he has published ten short stories in different anthologies on different themes. Also a playwright, Lord has seen a dozen of his plays and dozens of comic sketches professionally produced.

# Mirrors

Christopher Taylor, Singapore

## 1. Caroline

He is reclining in his leather armchair, reading the newspaper and she is watching him from the other side of the room. She has just come home from work. She has mixed a gin and tonic, easy on the tonic. She sips the bitter liquid and watches him flip the page.

‘What’s new?’ she says.

‘The world is fucked,’ he says.

‘Lucky world,’ she says. He doesn’t react. She takes a few paces, stops behind the armchair and puts a hand on his shoulder. ‘Anything I should care about?’ she says.

‘Another stewardess has been raped ... Forest fires in Sumatra. Protests outside terrorist trial in Manila.’

‘Nothing new, then.’ Her hand slides up his collarbone, her thumb massaging the back of his neck.

‘How was work?’ he says.

‘Oh, you know. I’m still working on that deal, the one with Jakarta. Lim’s still his pig-headed, sexist self. Company stocks holding up surprisingly well, considering.’

His gaze flicks back and forth. She sits on the arm of his chair and lets



her hand rest casually on his chest. He manoeuvres his arm around hers to turn another page of the newspaper. She looks out of the plate glass windows beyond the balcony to the golf course, and further, to Sentosa Island and the harbour. 'Manchester won,' he says.

Some time passes, and then she says, 'How about Bintan?'

'For what?'

'For a weekend.'

'Ya, okay. Can.'

'Okay. I'll book it.'

'Wait. What weekend? I have golf next three ones.'

'Honey,' she says, looking her husband straight in the eye. He looks up at her, meets her gaze and smiles. 'Can you make an excuse? Let's just go. Can't we?' He frowns. This is not part of his plan, she can see that. For a moment, she is intensely annoyed with him, almost to the point of hatred. But then she thinks, *Of course: everyone is like this. Nobody really wants to be spontaneous.* And she doesn't really want to go to Bintan anyway; it's a stupid island, covered in golf courses.

'Can ...' he says, half-heartedly, but she knows he is saying it to please her. It would be better if he just refused. She walks to the window and looks out. She hears the rustle of paper behind her. She turns and looks at him, then, with a purpose, walks back to the chair and kneels down.

'Keep reading your paper,' she says as she unzips his trousers and slides her slim fingers with their fuschia-polished nails inside. 'Keep reading, honey.'

## 2. Lim

'The amazing thing is, when you perfect this ...I can't call it a technique, lah. It's more like a kind of ... attitude. The thing is, what I'm getting at, they

come to you. You don't even have to try. I mean this girl ... married. And beautiful. Seriously.

'I mean, she was just there for eye candy, right? That's why we employ these MBA babes, to flick their rebonded hair and flutter the lashes. Clicky clicky on the mouse, oh-so-deh-lick-cate-ly. I could see these Jakarta guys getting all hot under the collar when she went through her Powerpoint slides. I want her to say, "Oops, I dropped my pencil, lah" and just, you know, bend over in that tight skirt, but she doesn't have to. The professionalism of this girl is much more of a turn-on, and when she walked up and fingered that laser pointer, I knew we had them. I was hard already from the fucking, excuse my French, from the deal. I just had to reel them in like fish. Too easy.

'So, anyway, the point is, I had no designs, absolutely none on this girl. I mean, she's married, I even played golf with her hubby once. I was quite shagged out anyway, you know what I mean, I went straight from Geylang to the airport and into the damn meeting and there I was, wired on coffee and just kind of winging it. We were in the hotel bar afterwards, and I was just thinking about my big, fat bonus, and it turns out she was thinking about my big fat boner ... Sorry, lah, sorry. I know, I know, don't cover your ears, it's okay, I just get carried away telling the story. So damned sweet.

'Anyway, there we are, in the hotel bar, at the bar, drinking Chivas and green tea to celebrate. I've got one eye on her, one on the television, which is showing the news, nothing interesting, no football, just some kind of riot being put down in the Philippines. And she says "So how is Mrs Lim?" and I'm like "She's a wonderful woman, I would do anything for her, she's a saint" because I'm in such a good mood. And is she pouting just a little at this? I don't know, they always look like they're pouting a little bit anyway, and anyway I don't notice, and she says "Your wife really understands you, then?". And I say "Well I suppose she does, as much as anyone understands

anyone else” because I’m kind of a philosopher sometimes, you know me.

‘Anyway, then she says something like “I have a wonderful marriage, my husband is taking me to Bintan next weekend” and I say that’s nice, and I drink some more Chivas, and she gives me a really long, kind of weird look, like I’ve said something really irritating, and after while, she says “How about Champagne?”. And I say “I think that is a very wonderful idea, and the company would be delighted to pay for us to drink Champagne given how we have nailed the Jakartans and all”, and so she orders a bottle and we polish it off in about twenty minutes, and by this point I suddenly start to think perhaps she might be MBA in more ways than one ...

‘What? You never heard that one? Married But Available ... ha ha ... anyway, at this point I am definitely starting to suspect that something may be on the cards, so I’m thinking, well I will just try something subtle, so I say “Have you checked the movies on the hotel TV?” and she says “Let’s go check them now” and she orders another bottle of Champagne and off we are going upstairs, leaning on each other and the walls but we get to her room, and ...

‘No, lah. No, I know you don’t want to know the saucy details, man, but seriously, her ass is the cutest thing I ever saw. Oh my god. Sorry, lah. Sorry. You’re such a good guy. I think it’s just my hormonal make-up or something. I am overactive in that department ever since I was—hey, beer, over here!—well, you know me.

‘Well, if you insist. Yes, we did. Yes, she was. I mean, seriously, I never ... the things she can do with those hands, even though I was a bit drunk and all. And I hardly had to move a muscle, just lay back and let it all happen. There was a movie on the TV too. It was a funny one, you know, that American one, with the students. Pie something.’

### 3. Marlene

She cannot decide whether he is an Epic or a Romantic. Clearly, according to the theory, he must be one or the other. So, she must work it out: which one is he?

It was not clear at first even that he was one of those two. It has taken her some time to narrow it down. But now he is inside her, pushing into her over and over again, and she is lying there on her belly, her face muffled in the pillow while he shunts behind her and she tries to work it out.

*Consider the evidence*, she thinks. For the Epic hypothesis: he cheats. Clearly. Repeatedly. This is obvious. And he doesn't feel guilty. The Romantics still do it, but they have this tragic look on their faces, like they hate themselves. He doesn't have that.

On the other hand, he clearly knows what he wants. There is a routine to this for him, she can see it. There is not enough adventure in this for him for it to be an Epic encounter.

So, it's an enigma. Unless, that is, there might be a new category. What would she call it? She frowns.

He finishes with a grunt and rolls over. She waits the usual length of time before showering, puts her clothes back on, checks herself in the mirror, and kisses him on the cheek.

'Thanks,' he says.

'Welcome,' she says, and heads out to the street, getting into a taxi. When the driver drops her off at the shopping centre, she picks her way up a halted escalator to the second floor, and shows her ID at the entrance to Club Island.

Inside, the band has started. A group of Western guys is being served beer. She stands nearby. One of them is very drunk, wearing a fright wig, a dog collar and a pair of frilly pink panties over the top of his jeans. 'My

fiance,' he is saying, 'is the best ... the best ... you know. Lovely, lovely, lovely. Lovely Keiko. I bloody love her.'

Marlene walks into his line of sight and gives him the look. He glances at her and smiles. *Mine*, she thinks.

As she is walking over to the group, it comes to her. *That Chinese businessman does need a new category*, she thinks, and now she knows what it is.

#### 4. Keiko

Seven weeks of silence  
I break on you like a wave  
Why are you absent?

Follow in bare feet  
We trace our cold apartment  
Our soles on cool tiles  
You, the setting sun  
Falling always away from me  
I run too slowly

Dark air between us  
My fingers ask a question  
Half your heart answers

Divide and divide  
Love leaks, an ebbing fluid  
Diminishing us

When did you leave me?

Why did I not notice it?

I don't understand

## 5. Brett

No work this week. Only essential travel to the Philippines is advised. Unrest has spread from the cities to the countryside. The rice fields are alight. Some flights are cancelled, including the ones he was due to pilot.

He arrives at Boat Quay at seven-fifteen and takes a table by the river, ordering a Heineken. Jazz drifts from the bar next door. Luminous towers dwarf the shophouses.

She arrives. He checks her out—small, cute—he approves—before standing and waving to catch her attention. She has the slightly knock-kneed gait of many Japanese women, as if modestly keeping her legs together. He will see about that.

He has made the most of these free evenings, and this is his fourth date of the week. God bless date-or-not.com, he thinks.

‘So, you’re an airline pilot,’ she says. ‘That must be very interesting.’

It’s a good sign. Impressed by his job. He checks her out subtly while sipping his beer. She will certainly do.

He is already thinking about the mirrors on his ceiling, how she will look, how he will look doing it to her when he sees them reflected. He has lost weight recently, buffed up a bit. He spent a full twenty-five minutes before heading out examining his reflection in the full-length wall mirror in his bedroom.

‘You have lovely ears,’ he says. He means it. She really does. Each woman has her own special part of the body, he thinks. Like Juvita, the air

hostess who kept blowing him in the aircraft toilets. Perfect neck. Tragic what happened to her.

‘Thank you,’ Keiko says, modestly. She insists on pouring his beer for him.

‘Would you like to see a great view of the city?’ he says.

‘Of course,’ she says.

\* \* \*

She is under him, her eyes wide. He shifts position so that she is on top. He grasps her slim hips with both hands, then lets the back of one graze across the gentle curve of her breasts, feeling the hard small nipples against his skin. Her mouth is open in a silent exclamation, her eyes tight shut, pelvis rocking. He glances upwards, taking in the sight of her moving on him, and his own body, taught under her. She opens her eyes, looks upwards, then squeezes them tightly shut again and digs her nails into his chest. For a moment, he looks up into his own eyes as if into those of an adversary, one who acknowledges him silently in the dimly lit room.

## 6. Juvita

She meets Andrew at her tennis club. They have sex that afternoon, in the showers of the ladies’ changing rooms, with the water running. They have sex at dusk, behind a bush in the Botanical Gardens, and in his car, and in the disabled toilets at the Esplanade in the interval of a classical concert, and on the beach on Bintan, and in every room of his apartment, and she sucks him off in the cable car between Harbour Front and Sentosa and wanks him off in the back of a multiplex on Orchard Road during a car chase. He is her thirty-second lover since it happened.

‘I love you,’ he says one day. She stops returning his calls.

## 7. Andrew

May is cooking rice and some kind of Japanese soup with seaweed in it. He stands in the kitchen with her, opens the wine and pours it into two blue-tinged, thick-stemmed glasses. *The trick is not to look too desperate*, he thinks. He discreetly checks out her buttocks and then feels guilty.

‘How was your friend’s birthday?’ he says.

‘Not bad,’ she says, tasting the soup. ‘Although we had a few too many, I’m afraid.’ He chuckles complicitly. ‘We had to send the birthday girl home early in a taxi. And then I got talking to a very nice couple, and, um, did that for a while. And then Saturday was shopping. How about you?’ She stirs more rapidly.

‘Pretty boring, I’m afraid,’ he says. ‘I just watched the news. Seems the Philippine thing has spread.’

‘Really?’ she says, absently. The rice cooker light flicks from red to amber.

\* \* \*

‘I hope I’m getting some sex tonight,’ she says as he takes the last spoonful of soup. He swallows heavily and looks at her, startled. ‘It doesn’t have to be right now,’ she adds quickly. ‘We can let our food settle first. Drink?’

Several very large gin-and-tonics later, he gets up, sits down, gets up again and they stagger together to her room. He fiddles with the portable CD player while she removes her clothes and lies back, ready. Barry White starts playing. They laugh together at the cheesiness of his choice. He falls back next to her and begins kissing her. Her tongue probes his mouth. He clutches



her breasts, then licks them. She makes noises of approval.

He pushes his hand down inside her panties and fingers her. She is already wet. He finds her clitoris and makes small circles with his finger. He pulls off her, and then his own, underwear. She lies back, legs open, eyes closed.

After a little while, his member is still, at most, half-mast. The room is turning gin-flavoured circles around his head, which he lowers to the bed to rest a little. It is a little worrying, but he optimistically reasons that if he just carries on, eventually things will sort themselves out.

He is about to suggest that she offer him a hand when she speaks. 'Can I say something direct?' she says. His middle digit keeps making small circles, the room large ones. 'If all I wanted was a finger,' she says, 'I wouldn't have bothered to cook for someone. I could have done that on my own.'

'Sorry,' he says.

'Perhaps,' she says, 'you would like to just talk some more. We could exchange knitting patterns. Would you like to do that instead?'

He withdraws his hands from her and lies staring at the curtains. She sighs and looks him in the eyes.

'Let me introduce you to my best friend,' she says. She reaches under the bed and pulls out a smooth black dildo, a foot and a half long. His eyes widen. She grasps it two-handed, rolls sideways and impales herself on it, groaning convulsively as she comes, and then lies still, smiling. It is like watching someone commit Japanese ritual suicide.

Andrew gets up and pulls on his boxer shorts. 'I have to go,' he says.

'Really?' she says, looking surprised. 'Why?'

8. May

'That just gave me a great idea for a story.'

‘You want me to stop?’

‘No ... just. Ah. No ... Listen. I’m thinking ...’

‘Seriously, Alex, at least finish fucking me before you start work.’

‘Okay ...’

‘Okay ... Ah. Yes.’

‘...’

‘Is that good, baby?’

‘It’s ... um. Yes.’

‘Yes?’

‘Yes ... in the conflict. It’s set on one of the rebel-held islands ...’

‘Oh, for God’s sake. I’m not going to stop, you know.’

‘No ... keep going, it’s good.’

‘I know. I’m damn good. They all say that.’

‘...’

‘Oh ...’

‘... and the rebel leader has a kind of harem, of girls from the local population ...’

‘For fuck’s sake, Alex.’

‘Sorry ... Ah! Is that a new trick?’

‘Do you like it?’

‘... but his favourite one escapes, and it kind of ruins his ... Oh My Fucking Christ ... Ah!’

‘Okay, I give up. Keep going with the story. I’ll just ...’

‘Jesus. And he goes looking for the girl ...’

‘Wait, let me try it like this.’

‘And he finds her. In a ...’

‘In a?’

‘In a brothel, in a local town ...’

‘...’

‘... and he can’t touch her any more, because to him it’s as if she was ... polluted.’

‘People are shit.’

‘Yep. This guy especially so.’

‘...’

‘Oh.’

‘Touch me here.’

‘... and he’s so pissed off that he goes back to the jungle and brings his rebels and burns down the brothel and burns and massacres half the town for good measure, just out of pique ...’

‘...’

‘... and after the battle, he’s in his tent and a girl comes in at night and ...’

‘And ...?’

‘... and does ... what you just did ... and it ... blows his ...’

‘Uhuh?’

‘... ah ... his mind. And he wakes up next morning and sees that it’s the same girl, escaped from the burning brothel.’

‘And?’

‘... and he realizes the error of his ways and embraces true love.’

‘...’

‘Oh God, May ...’

‘Okay ...’

‘Don’t stop ... keep going ...’

‘That’s it. That’s it. Oh yes. Yes. Yes. Yes.’

‘Jesus ... fucking ... Christ ... on a ... fucking ... bike ...’

‘...’

‘...’

‘That was good.’

‘You’re not kidding.’

‘But you know what?’

‘What?’

‘Your story sucks.’

## 9. Alex

You have to be fucking kidding me. A *dude*?

## 10. Nong

She tucks her dick and balls between her legs and slips on the tight black trousers. Arranges her silicon tits inside purple lace. Practices her pout in the mirror. She is picked up and driven to the ambassador’s residence, showing her ID at the manned gate. ‘Hello Baby,’ she says to him.

They spend the evening doing all the things he likes, which are many and varied, and include, after the semen has dried on the sheets and used condoms litter the floor, talking about the international situation.

Over these last months, she has offered her advice on various matters, but this is the most important. Now the trouble has spread to several countries, including her own, and his country is considering sending in its military in support of its allies. Tomorrow’s negotiation is, as he puts it, the crunch. She worries for him. She soothes him, says kind things, thoughtful things, insightful things. He will consider her advice, he says. Then she leaves, discreetly picking up the envelope of cash from the table on her way out to where a limousine is waiting, the driver trying not to make it obvious that he is staring from the side of his eyes in a fascination he would not admit to in front of his friends.

## 11. Charles

She asked him for a favour. There were so few flights, and her family were all back there, her children also, and she missed them, she was worried, and she was very sorry to ask and to bother him but she was due the vacation and he was so important and so smart, could he get her back home for Christmas? No, he said, too dangerous, the jungle is full of terrorists, but when she wept, he couldn't stand it. He relented and pulled a string or two. She was booked on one of the few flights still operating to Cebu City.

Now, in the quiet of the early evening, with the dark palms whispering outside in the garden and deep-throated bullfrogs honking in the trees like a broken accordion, the ambassador returns to his house with a heavy heart. He sits in the leather armchair and rests his forehead in his hands. She brings him a glass of Highland Park with a single ice cube, and puts down a bowl of pistachio nuts.

He looks up at her. She has a kind face. 'Thank you, Rosa,' he says.

'Is there anything else I can do, Sir?' she asks. He says that there is not. She steps forward, takes his hand and touches it to her forehead.

What follows could be construed as exploitation, as abuse of his power over her. This thought certainly crosses his mind briefly during the act, but he dismisses it. When he comes, it is with a strange feeling of peace, as if all his striving, all his work is doomed to futility, but that he doesn't mind at all.

## 12. Rosa

Rosa is awake in the night. A gecko says "*geck-oh*" with the voice of a dog's squeaky bone. Insects chorus and then cease in unison at the sound of a shot in the forest. The air is close, unstirred.

The moon has disappeared now, and through the uncurtained window,

Rosa can see the silhouette of the volcano against a backdrop of stars. She wonders what the stars are. Are they angels in Heaven? Are they the souls of dead children? Are they the frozen tears of God?

She flies up to touch them.

\* \* \*

She must have drifted into sleep because she did not notice him come in, but now a dark figure stands by her bed. She catches her breath, thinking that it is her husband, Reynante, come back from his hiding place in the forest. It is too dangerous, she thinks. If they catch him ... but this, after all, is why she has come back.

She cannot bear to open her eyes fully, so she pretends to be asleep and watches through quivering lashes. Something metallic is lowered gently to the floor. He stands, not moving, but he is looking at her, she can tell. *Go away*, she thinks. *Hide*.

*Stay*, she thinks.

She is sure he can hear her thoughts.

His breathing can now be heard, with the merest edge of a wheeze. She tries to remember how her husband breathes. Is it like this?

He lies down on the bed next to her. After some more time, a rough knuckle barely touches the skin of her belly, withdraws, then comes back, stroking her skin below the T-shirt. Her heart beats fast.

She closes her eyes and lets the tip of one small finger stray to where he is.

\* \* \*

In the darkness, with the sound of the ocean and the forest outside, he enters her. And as he enters her, her soul leaves her body and flies up, away from this small house, up to the million stars; and she looks down on their two bodies making love, on the wooden house with the vegetables growing outside and the fishing boat hauled up on the black-sand beach, on the forest stretching up the side of the smoking mountain and on the islands all around, the thousands of sand-fringed islands in this calm sea, dotted by human souls. And as she feels him enter her again and again and clutches at him, she feels her soul rise higher, so that she can see the whole world, and every dwelling place in the world, and every couple who at that moment is making love; and for a moment, each couple is a fire, burning in the night, a flickering pinpoint of light on the curving dark map of the Earth.

And the sky above is a great mirror, stretching away to eternity all around, the fires reflected in its depths.

And suddenly she knows what the stars are.

### **About the author:**

Christopher Taylor was born in the north of England and has lived and worked in England, Zimbabwe and Singapore. He currently lives in Manchester, where he works as a mathematician.

# The Politician

Amirul B Ruslan, Malaysia

Everything had to be discreet. This was the seventh time he had done this, but each time he still felt the usual pangs of worry, of guilt. Voices played out in his head. One of them was the monotone of a newsreader as she—he always envisioned it as a she, and so it must be a she—presented the lurid details of this scandal. One of them was the cruel chastising by his late mother, a voice gone from this earth over twenty years, but constantly returning to haunt his subconscious each time he performed this deviant act.

The hotel he was now staying in on the blissful, blisteringly hot island of Penang was a colonial relic. His father wouldn't have approved. His father hated all things colonial, and indeed gave up his life fighting colonial oppressors. First the Japanese, then the British. He fought proudly to Independence and marched into—no, the politician thought, no. He cut the thought there and then, questioning, pleading to his mind: Why do I have to reminisce on my father's achievements now? Was it because he was a religious man? Was it because if he knew, he would call me a deviant, a pervert?

The hotel was grand and almost over-the-top in its pretension. Whatever British elegance it had in the 1920s when it was built was now hidden



behind layers of coarse Malaysian ‘aesthetic’ of out-of-place Ionic pillars, tiled floors and wide, gold-painted door frames. The politician had been an architect before he became a politician, and even after decades of being in the country’s less-than-refined body politic, this vulgar so-called sophistication wounded his senses.

But what mattered most was not the furniture or the windows or the high ceilings or the grand piano in the lobby or the way the staff—Malays no less, good Malays playing submissive servants to the under-dressed hedonist tourist masses that flocked to this island paradise—shuffled around. What mattered most was that everything today stayed discreet. And as he walked along the corridor leading to the hotel lounge, brushing away an overeager bellboy asking, ‘Y.B., anything I can help you with?’ with that subservient tone in Malay, he saw her.

She was standing by the reception, looking busy. She had her BlackBerry out, and while it seemed like she was furiously tapping out a message, some important email, no doubt, the politician knew that she was paying attention to the lounge with her darting eyes. When their eyes met from across the hall, she pocketed her BlackBerry and gave a small nod. That was all. A small nod.

She looked good, just as she always did, this thirty-five-year-old woman who had been sneaking away to rendezvous with him for over four years now. She was a whore—he couldn’t bear calling her profession by any other name, as they all felt overly sanitized. Prostitute? Escort? Call girl? Courtesan? *Don’t kid yourself, Y.B., she’s a whore, pure and simple.* But she was a whore he felt a great deal of attachment to, and he treated these trysts with a great deal of excitement.

He met her at the elevator. He was already inside, the only person in there, when she rushed towards the closing doors. As if to show his potent

chivalry, instead of pressing down on the Open button, he instead lodged himself into the doorway, letting her pass. Cunningly, he also sneaked a grope in as she squeezed past, one hand reaching out to feel the fine curvature of her ass. She didn't seem to like it. He did.

His room was on the seventeenth floor, a luxurious suite that was overly indulgent, even to him, for someone who was only going to be staying on the island for one night. The elevator lurched upward. He idly whistled. She smoothed her blouse. She was standing at the corner, almost vulnerable as she seemed to hide away. A poster partitioned away by a cold glass pane sat beside her, promoting the latest Filipino house band that was playing at the hotel. He opened his mouth, and tilted closer to her. Fifth floor. 'Dahlia ...' he began.

She didn't even seem to pay any attention.

Sixth floor. He inched closer again, small inches growing to bigger inches. He cornered her where she was. She looked up at him. Finally, some eye contact. His hand tried for her thigh, the one wrapped in the fine black stocking under her skirt. He half-expected her to slap him. She didn't. Her furious, cold stare still kept his gaze, as his fingers brushed up. Eighth floor. Her skirt lifted just a bit ...

Then she commanded him. 'Step away right now.' She spoke with such strength in her voice. Domination. He instinctively followed as she instructed. He moved back to his corner. Ninth floor. She turned to face him, brushing her skirt back to its previous meticulous, flawless state. Her voice softened, but there was no mistaking the vigor still within. 'Are you stupid? There's a camera right there, up above where you're standing.'

So there was. It wasn't like he didn't know that; of course he knew. He just couldn't resist. He couldn't resist being told off, being called stupid, the

sort of verbal abuse he could only find from her, or in Parliament.

‘For someone who makes such a big deal about discretion ...’ she trailed off, as if uninterested in continuing in that thread. The politician looked up at the ceiling, a smooth surface refashioned as a mirror. He saw the top of her head, the push of her bounteous breasts. It was like topography to him. A silence held. Thirteenth floor. He didn’t want to succumb to apologizing. He knew he would be doing a lot of that later, in the room.

Seventeenth floor. When the elevator doors opened, he stepped out with confident strides left, towards his suite. He shuffled through his coat pockets to find the keycard. Room 1726, there. A cleaning lady, Malay again, another deferential Malay with incessant bowing, stepped away as he passed, muttering, ‘Good evening, Datuk Haji.’ The last honorific was particularly ironic. They called him a Haji as if he were truly the religious man he appeared, even as he used their facilities for illicit pleasures.

He reached his door and craned his neck to see the corridor as he grasped the handle and slid the keycard in. His whore had not followed him yet. She was professional like that. His room, when he entered, was spotless. The large bed had been done, probably less than ten minutes ago, and he stepped to the bathroom. Both the suite and bathroom doors were left slightly ajar, to invite his guest in to join him.

In the bathroom, he felt another sudden pang of worry: it was because he saw his reflection. But with the light off there, he first saw a different figure. He saw his father, the real Datuk Haji, a political heavyweight who was as much the Malay warrior before Independence as afterwards. He saw his father frown at him, liquid disapproval causing him a near panic attack. When his clammy hands reached for the light switch and the room bathed him in light and warmth, the reflection melted into the somewhat more

comforting sight of his own face.

He heard the door swing gently open as he washed his hands, staring at himself. He looked like a true Captain of Industry. At nearly fifty, he was still in perfect health, with a body that was more accurately described as 'sturdy'. His features were solid, and in their own way, handsome. His beard was trimmed just enough, a calculated move to make him appear vaguely religious while unquestionably professional. He had a lot of hair still, in contrast to most of his party's leaders.

He wiped his face with wet hands. He looked a lot like his father, except for missing the warrior's icy eyes, the permanent disapproving frown. Again he dispelled the thought as he loosened his tie, hung his coat on the rack, and kicked his shoes off. He stepped towards the bed. Dahlia was already there, waiting for him.

The whore wore a grey skirt from some famous Italian brand that ended sharply at her knees, and her blouse was white and immaculate. She had glossy black high heels that highlighted her beautifully shaped feet, and black stockings like a fabric version of his yellow brick road. To top it off, she wore glasses that magnified the fortitude in her eyes. He sat down beside her.

She looked at him wordlessly, and rotated ever so slightly, one hand placed down between them and balancing her and she placed her right leg on his lap. Her foot fidgeted, and he removed her shoe. 'No,' she said, in English, always English, even though English was his much weaker language, 'Put it back on, and do it again.'

There was a strict precision to this process, and she didn't let him deviate from it in any way. He rubbed his thumb against her ankle as he slipped her black heel off. He must have done it correctly, as he was rewarded with her kissing down on his clothed shoulder, feeling her hot breath over his shirt.

She withdrew her right leg and proffered her left, one hand tracing over the politician's back. Her fingernails pressed against the fabric of his shirt. She continued kissing. He continued removing her shoe.

Every act she chose to do was a carefully calculated step in her flawless seduction. Were the politician a more worldly man, he would have compared her grace to a geisha's. He kissed her toe and received a sharp knock to the back of his neck from her wrist in return. He looked at her, bewildered. 'Not yet,' she said, glaring. The good whore giveth and the good whore taketh away: she slid both legs away from him, and no longer kissed his shoulder.

'*Maaf*,' he apologized quickly. In public he was a man of very few apologies. A scandal in Parliament two terms ago as a result of a remark deemed racist had effectively cost him a minister's post. It wasn't racist, it was a fact of life, he reasoned. A man must speak with conviction, and never back down. That last saying was his father's ... again. *God, why did he have to come down from Heaven to advise me now?* he thought, returning his attention to Dahlia.

She had taken to the far end of the bed, propping pillows to support her back. She spread her covered legs but pushed down on the middle edge of her skirt, limiting what he could see. 'For a whore, you are really ...' But that was the best his English could say. His words faded away. She paid those words no mind.

Still pressing down the hem of her skirt as she spread, a twinkle in her eye, a rare approving one, invited him to come get her. 'Unbutton my blouse,' she commanded again. He positioned himself between her legs and leaned forward. It was timid, careful. He started with the top; she only ever let him start with the top. The politician's fingers no longer had the dexterity of his sketching days, and they groped for the button. He released each button with

the sort of precision he knew she wanted, and then with each, she sighed a little. These micro-moans were so soft it seemed as if it were only for her own ears. He was three buttons down when he felt Dahlia's hands wrapping his neck. She felt his neck, and with thumbs she began to choke him.

He finished unbuttoning, having tugged out the tucked-in portion of her blouse, and now her blouse was no longer tight and precise, but dangling out, releasing those breasts. He thought in Malay, and then in English, that there was no truly accurate word for them in both languages. They were not just breasts, they were more than that. Bosom was too formal. Tits was the closest that he could think of, but that word was too dirty and American, and not a word he would ever think of using.

‘What are you thinking?’

He looked up at her, wrenched away from that distraction. ‘Nothing,’ he assured her.

‘You never think.’ It was the end of the conversation already. She had incredible power in her words; no party leader had that sort of authority. The Prime Minister, all the Prime Ministers in the past, none of them could match up to her sovereign vocal will. The word he thought of, for some reason, was *supremasi*. Supremacy?

Next she placed both feet on his chest, blocking him. He rubbed the back of her thighs with his hands, feeling light sweat on her skin. He leaned closer but she pushed him back, still. She made a minor striptease as she removed her stockings. Each move was elegant as she writhed to free herself. Her feet dropped, toes catching onto the band on his pants, and with adroitness he had never seen before, even from her, she was able to unzip his pants, her feet doing all the work for him. Her hands moved behind her and slipped under her blouse. She undid her bra, an elegant French piece with laces and frills

she wouldn't let him see or touch, and it slipped right off, falling forward.

The politician looked at his Rolex, but that moment of inattention earned him a brief kick to his chin. He apologized again. 'Kiss my feet,' she said, speaking seductively, brushing her feet up against the politician's face. He did as she said. It was a strange feeling for him to be treated like this, to be instructed. He kissed up from her legs, up, up, until reaching her moist inner thighs, sweat-slicked, perspiration the only reminder that she was as mortal as he was. As beholden to urges as he was.

He waited for her to instruct him to pleasure her, but she never did. Without this permission, he seemed to be unable to kiss further, tentatively rubbing where he couldn't kiss with a thumb. He could smell her, now. She wore dark grey nylon panties similarly laced and frilled as her bra. She still remained stoic and silent.

'I want to—' he attempted, before she shot him down with a glare. He kept that gaze for a while, before she prodded him with a foot down against his groin. She probably wanted him to continue, but not progress further. This teasing was just like her.

This went on for another ten minutes. Up and down, up, slightly, then down, slightly, tracing this invisible iron curtain. He knew she liked it, because he could smell her getting heavier with lust, a stronger, more potent, physical scent. At one point, licking her thigh, he even tasted something different, other than the taste of moist flesh and salty sweat. Earthier, more real. Surely it would not be long, the politician thought.

Eventually she relented, two fingers moving the panties aside. He stretched forward, an instinctive motion. He somehow could sense his late father chiding him, though this time not because he was some deviant adulterer, but instead because he was now this servile, obsequious pathetic

creature made to follow specific instructions from this whore.

*But ayah, he thought, she is not just any woman! She could control anybody if she wanted to. His father shot back an angry, otherworldly retort: Be a man and take what you want, when you want it. When you grovel, you bring disgrace to your so-called achievements, you bring disgrace to your role as a leader of men, head of your family.*

He lapped her up when she unthinkingly allowed him, with no other desire than to give her pleasure. He was not actually there; he was arguing with ghosts. If he were there, he would have heard Dahlia's moans, first starting short and small, and then growing in volume.

His face was full of it, all in it. He faced his father and asked aloud, antagonized, 'What do you want from me?'

'More,' he heard a confident, salacious response, but it came from Dahlia, not his father. This brought him back to where he was. No ghosts were here.

He pulled back, wiping his face. He simply could not go on. Dahlia didn't look like her usual self anymore, suddenly. She no longer looked flawless and professional. Her hair was slightly untidy, and she was blushing, and she bit her lip and looked ... different. She was partially undressed, and so was he. He looked around and no ghosts were here.

He reeled back in horror. 'Go, just ... go.'

'What?'

'Please, go,' he pleaded. He took his wallet out of his pants pocket and pulled out crisp notes. Fifty ringgit. A hundred. Another hundred. Two, three, five, eight hundred. He flicked them her way.

This broke her icy coolness. She was confused, but so was he. 'You haven't even ...' she stuttered.



‘I don’t want to.’

A long moment passed, tense between them. She collected the notes from the bed, repositioned her panties. She took her bra and didn’t even ask him for help putting it back on. He just stared at her. She put her shoes back on and walked over to the door. She gave him one last look, and this time he saw some strange vein of pity in there. Pity for who, for him?

When she left, he exhaled. He stared to the ceiling as he lay down in bed. Her scent was strong, and her lasting presence was damp on the covers. As he stared up, he tried to conjure those ghosts, begging for their approval, that now she was out of the way, they could talk. But no ghosts were here.

No ghosts were here.

#### **About the author:**

Unlike the politician in “The Politician”, Amirul B Ruslan is a twenty-one-year-old Malaysian journalist and writer. His journalism work has been published in TELL Magazine and The Star. The Best of Southeast Asian Erotica is his fiction debut. Amirul enjoys backpacking, enigmatic conversations, and long walks on the beach.

# Femme Fatale

O Thiam Chin, Singapore

Revenge was topmost on Pearlyn's mind as she entered the master bedroom. She had done a quick headcount of the number of people in today's sex group. Eight men, five women. Thirteen, a good number—and ironical too, she thought, chuckling to herself.

As the men and women single-filed into the bedroom, small talk and suppressed whispers continued to be exchanged. One of the men, the owner of this five-room flat in Jurong, had switched on the CD player and a soft, ethereal tune began to play. The bedroom smelled of cheap aromatherapy oils, and several stubs of candles were lighted around the room, throwing waving, elongated human shadows on the walls. The thick, velvety curtains had been drawn shut. Pearlyn hated the pervasive aromatherapeutic smell that plagued the room, but she chose to grin and bear the odours silently.

The men were the first to take off their clothes, dropping their pants and removing their light-coloured polo-tees or long-sleeved shirts in a haste, impatient to start the session. The women, on the other hand, fumbled with their tight skirts and bra-straps. A few eager men even assisted some of the women with their undressing.

Pearlyn took her time as she undressed, wanting to seize the opportunity

to focus the lusty eyes of the men in the bedroom on her. She knew her body well enough to use it to its advantages—her smooth, slender legs, her 36D-sized breasts, and her shaved pussy. It was the latter asset, that shaved pussy, that turned the men on; she knew men were attracted by it, its bareness conveying a sense of vulnerability and virginity that drew men to it. Pearlyn had concluded this with a cold, hard clarity from the numerous group-sex sessions she had attended in the past few months.

The ruttish men wasted no time as they moved in on the women in the group they wanted. A young muscle-clad man approached Pearlyn and began to fondle her breasts gently. Pearlyn moaned in response and arched her body forward, pushing it towards him. “You are number one,” she muttered inwardly.

The young man took her hands and guided her to a sheep-skin rug beside the large bed and lay her on it. Spreading her legs, Pearlyn pressed the man’s head to her chest; the man began to nibble at her hardened nipples. Pearlyn let out a louder groan this time, drawing other available men, unknowing victims, to her web.

She closed her eyes and receded into her secret thoughts, like an elusive sea creature slipping into a deeper, darker depth. The young man jerked her body upwards as he lay on his back, and in this sitting position, Pearlyn guided his hard cock into her, edging it in roughly, causing the man to take a harder bite on her left breast. Another man approached from behind and pushed himself into her ass. Number two, she counted.

Her time would soon be up, Pearlyn knew, but before she went, she would take as many of them with her as possible, like an ancient Egyptian pharaoh who brought his whole household, family and slaves, with him when he passed into the next world.

Pearlyn had received the news nine months ago, when she went for an anonymous AIDS test at Kelantan Lane, a month after a particularly hot-and-heavy session when the guy who had doggie-fucked her broke his condom. Completely devastated by the results, she took a free-fall into an emotional chasm. She wrestled through the whole gamut of experiences, from denial and anger to what-ifs and what-could-have-beens. But one thing that she had refused to come to terms with was acceptance. She refused to back down in the face of death. She had never been a victim, and she refused, even now with this disease, to become a victim.

The only residue from this exhausting existential struggle, after all her emotion, physical strength and will-power were spent, was the deep, bone-dry anger that left an indelible mark on her. This anger soon hardened into a rage that simmered menacingly under her nonchalant façade. And it was this intense rage that gave her back the will to live, to do what she had set her mind to achieve: this plan of revenge, claiming her pound of flesh.

Pulling herself away from the *ménage à trois*, Pearlyn moved on to the small cluster on the bed, their arms and legs all over one another. She grabbed a purplish-looking cock brusquely from another woman and roughly nudged her aside. She began to suck on it hungrily before inserting it into her. She started to pump away, deeper and deeper, and groaned ecstatically with every thrust. Another down, she noted.

So from one man to another, to another, Pearlyn moved among the group of sweaty bodies with a profound determination, making mental notes on who had been exposed and who still hadn't. Her mind was sharp and her body flushed red from the physical exertions.

Finally, the session wound down to an end, as people started to break away from the action and began cleaning themselves with handfuls of

Kleenex and wet tissues. Pearlyn got off the bed, her body shining like a new-born Venus emerging from a giant shell, glistening in the dimness of the room with tiny droplets of cum and perspiration. She moved to the pile of clothes on the floor, picked up her white cotton shirt and silk pleated skirt, and, without wiping herself off, began to put on her clothes. Her white shirt plastered itself to her chest and back, making it almost translucent.

Once she was done, Pearlyn left the master bedroom quietly and went into the living room where she collected her black Gucci bag from the couch. With a quick check on its contents, and a backward glance and snicker at the bedroom, she left the apartment.

As Pearlyn was about to enter the lift, she dug out her PDA from the bag and flicked it on. Checking through her calendar, she noted that there would be another session this coming Saturday at 7 pm, at an executive condominium in Bishan. "Good," she uttered softly under her breath, her eyes glistening brightly, with an almost inhuman intensity.

#### **About the author:**

O Thiam Chin's short stories have appeared in many literary anthologies and journals, including *Asia Literary Review*; *Quarterly Literary Review Singapore*; *Cha: An Asian Literary Journal*; *Kyoto Journal: Asiatic*; and *Asia Writes*. He is the author of three collections of short stories, *Free-Falling Man* (2006); *Never Been Better* (2009), longlisted for the 2010 Frank O' Connor Short Story Award; and *Under The Sun* (2010). He was an honorary fellow of the Iowa International Writing Program in 2010. Having just completed his fourth story collection, he is currently working on his first novel.

# Celibation

Lee Yew Moon, Singapore

I feel you come, just before I am about to release the tension that has pleased me. Your lightness floats on me as you let go. Before I can come, you raise your hips and unsheathe my penis while the rest of you remains on me. You rock your hips and brush your pubic hair along my shaft, leaving moisture on me I will always smell.

Untamed, my penis tingles and strengthens. You peel slowly away from me.

Light floods between us. Dawn brings the squawk of a feral cockatoo which turns my face toward the window. The sky dazzles me. I turn back to look at you, and you are gone.

I'm still hard, throbbing ... but unfulfilled.

\* \* \*

“So, you say this happens to you almost every morning?”

“Yes, Elder Anton.”

“But we really have no proof that you are capable of ...” He paused, probably looking for words that would not offend. Offend his own value

system, that is. “It’s quite clear that you cannot get an erection. We have administered the three prescribed tests and it hasn’t stood the test, so to speak.”

“But Elder, I get it everyday, in the morning.”

“So you say. But the council needs to see it. Our orders are very clear—when appropriately stimulated, candidates for elderhood must show ... arousal. Otherwise, as the Holy Chapters point out, the vow of chastity does not mean any sacrifice.’

“I know that, Elder.” I was desperate. Yet I paused. “But why would I want to join your Order if I don’t sense that I have been called? It isn’t exactly a life of fun and games I am asking for.”

There was a long pause. “The Inspired Ones were all-seeing. They knew that our Order could become the refuge of all manner of men hiding their inadequacies behind our restrictions and good repute.”

Another pause.

“That’s why we have the tests. On admission, all Elders must be fully functional men who have actively given up the enjoyment of those functions.”

This was old ground.

“Yet it does not seem you are seeking refuge.” He paused to look at me fully. ‘And your earnestness is clearly deep. I will have to call the Council.”

He trotted out of the Interview Room. About fifteen minutes passed. The door opened again. Elder Anton returned with another elder. They were, both of them, solemn.

“This is Elder Renee from the Seclusion Order. In matters such as these, we call on another Order to help us. As things are, we cannot admit you into our order. All three arousal tests have proven negative, and by this stage, all previous unqualified candidates have dropped out on their own.”

The other elder spoke. "We're honestly very surprised that you're still so insistent on continuing. In fact, we are impressed." Short pause. "But we cannot let our impressions, strong though they may be, undermine the sacred laws of the Inspired Ones."

"I see." I got ready to leave.

"We took a closer look at the Holy Chapters, and discovered that while we cannot let our impressions decide your entry, we are allowed to give you one more chance if we are collectively of the opinion that the standard tests might have been unfair to you."

"The Council is of that opinion."

I stood naked in a room so dimly lit I could not even see its walls. I had been brought in blindfolded and told not to move beyond a chalk circle drawn on the floor. This was my last chance to join the Order, to prove that I could have an erection, even ejaculation, so that I could take a vow of chastity and truly abstain.

I waited until I tired and felt cold from my nakedness. I also tired because, once again, I had that ... encounter ... in my sleep. It woke me up even earlier than usual, and I did not sleep after that.

Being tired was not going to help, and I was not hopeful. Previous attempts had been well calibrated and I didn't know why I had not responded. The Order had tried to arouse me through visual, auditory, even smell stimuli. But I remained soft. I tried very hard to invoke your presence to help me harden, but it only seemed to make matters worse!

A door opened and a faint glow filled the space. A female form, covered from head to toe in a white robe, came into view. She danced, with the grace of a ballerina. As she moved, her thin robe pressed against her otherwise



naked form. Perhaps it was this, but also probably because I could smell her, that I sensed the fleeting touches of animal energy tingling my body. She danced around me, but just out of my reach. I could not keep my eyes off her.

There was no music! She danced, full of grace, to silence. Her robe parted to provide a glimpse of her pubis fettered only by a gentle bush. Her skin glowed amid the dimness. Her robe parted further to reveal her breasts heaving to her dance.

I reached out, but then remembered the chalk circle. I stretched out my hand and just managed to touch and hold her robe. It came off in my hand. Only her face remained covered.

Through her hood, our eyes met and I had to have her. I would break the rules and leave the circle; and, of course, the Order!

I dropped the robe and stepped out of the circle. She froze at my transgression. I reached out to touch her and saw her looking down. HELL! It was still ... soft. I was about to drag her into sex with me and I was still soft. I froze too. I looked up at her and noticed she was uncovering her head.

“Sister.” It was Elder Anton. “Don’t!”

“Sister?” I gasped. From the Seclusion Order? I felt sick. By then, she had run out of the room naked.

“As you can see for yourself, you have failed to achieve arousal.” Elder Anton was agitated. “We cannot admit you into the Order. This has been your last chance. Please leave the room, dress and go. Do not come back to us again.”

It was then dark, and silent. I walked to where I felt the door was, opened it and started walking ...

\* \* \*

... across twenty years into this room, beside her.

I don't know why I'd bothered. Since that day two decades ago, my only 'arousal' had been with you. I'd disappointed every other woman, even with medication. Ten years ago, I'd stopped trying or even responding.

When she poses at my figure-drawing classes, she puts her entire soul and body into the stillness of the pieces. My students love her for her beauty and ease, as do I.

Then she offers to show me her room. I accept, knowing she is 'safe'. So I am here.

After seeing her room, we chat. Our voices drift across the evening into the night—there seems much to chatter on about. It is almost morning and we are tired. She asks if she could lie down. I say it is her place. She asks if I'm tired, and if I'd do the same. There is only one bed.

The chatter floats and I fall asleep, preparing to meet you.

I am without clothes, and you are on top of me. You have slipped your vagina around my penis and are rubbing it with the gestures of sex. As you do so, you grip and let go of me, inducing a swell of pleasure, I also sense your pleasure.

I feel you come, just before I am about to release the tension that has pleased me. Your lightness floats on me as you let go. I wait for you to raise your hips and unsheathe my penis ... but you go on. You rock your hips with me still inside and your scent, now mixed with mine, floods my senses.

You go on, and we thrash and thrash, and I move into a past when I had known pleasure.

I come, and come, and come.

\* \* \*

Light floods between us. Dawn brings the squawk of a feral cockatoo which turns my face toward the window. The sky dazzles me. I turn back to look at you, and you are ... her!

“We ...?” You look at me, dripping with joy, wafting in our scent.

“Twenty years ago, I fell in love with you before I was born. I knew you would love me too, but you wanted to join that Order and I would have lost you forever. I had to keep you from that and from the other women, because I know you would have married them. I am sorry I made you wait so long.”

We kiss.

#### **About the author:**

Though a theatre person at heart, Lee Yew Moon makes his living from teaching and training. Writing is an itch he can never quite scratch satisfactorily. Still he keeps fiddling with it, the way one fiddles with a scab. And he also believes that if he must write, it must involve eroticism, even if it is not ‘erotic’. This is because sex is a precondition for life and is best experienced with pleasure.

# I, Teiresius

Alaric Leong, Singapore

‘Yes, they’re real.’ A pause. ‘One hundred percent real.’

Talk about being jolted; I felt like a school kid who’d just been caught doing something naughty in class. I mean, that clarification came from out of nowhere. We had been talking about the advertising industry when suddenly my companion there at the bar had thrown that at me.

‘Uhh ... excuse me. I didn’t mean to—’ No, I didn’t mean to, but the worst thing was that the moment I was accused of it, my eyes automatically slipped down to peer at the things I’d been just sneaking peeks at until then.

She put her hand under my chin and lifted it just a little, to face level.

‘My eyes. The colour? This is the real colour of my eyes, this hazel brown. One of my great grandparents was European, from Bohemia or somewhere. I evidently inherited that gene from him.’

‘I see. Yes, your eyes. I was ... wondering about that colour. I mean, these days, with all the things you can do, shaded lenses and all.’

‘Believe me, I don’t have any lenses. I don’t need them.’

‘That’s good to know.’

Then came that sly smile. ‘The other things, they’re also real. The things you were just sneaking repeated looks at.’

‘Excuse me, I didn’t—’

‘Haven’t we been here before? Anyway, to put your doubts to rest: these tits are mine, too.’

‘Of course. Who else’s would they be?’

And then he ... she ... this strange person sitting opposite me threw his, her head back and gave this husky, deep-throated laugh. Which only deepened my suspicions. Whatever the current status of this woman, I was pretty sure she did not start out life as a female. There were all sorts of clues; that manly laugh was just one of many.

‘By the way, what’s your full name, Mr Advertising Accounts Executive?’

‘Oh, that’s right, I didn’t ... Raymond Chua.’

‘Raymond. Nice name. I’ve always liked that name. I’ve often thought that if I have maybe six sons, one of them will definitely be called Raymond.’

‘Yeah? Well, like they say, everybody loves Raymond. And your name is ...?’

‘Teresa. That’s good enough for now. A simple Teresa.’

‘But not so simple a person, I think.’

Teresa then crossed her very shapely legs and smiled. ‘I court complexities. Simple is, for me, just a synonym for “boring”.’

‘I see.’

‘I hope you don’t see! If you did, I wouldn’t be complex enough.’

‘Okay. Uhh ... can I buy you another drink?’

Teresa nodded. ‘I think so. But only if I can buy you a drink in the next round after this one.’

‘I wouldn’t say “no”.’ And I didn’t.

And so it went for four more rounds, each of us alternating on buying

the next round. Her drink was white wine, mine was red. And after that fifth round for both of us, *in vino veritas* had taken command of the conversation. It also produced a certain level of physical comfort. Teresa had already slipped her hand over mine a couple of rounds back, and had now moved it up under my shirt sleeve, lightly stroking the hair on my forearm.

‘So ... do you like me, Raymond?’

‘I think I do.’

He .. she laughed. ‘Why are guys always like that? I wasn’t asking who you think is going to win the World Cup. I asked you about your feelings, what you feel. You’re not sure what you feel?’

‘Well, I ... what I feel is complex. It’s ... I don’t know how to explain.’

‘Okay, Raymond, I do like you. Like you quite a bit. Like you enough to let you ask me.’

‘Ask you what?’

‘Ask me the question you’ve been wanting to ask since you first saw me earlier this evening, across the room, when you liked what you saw and then wondered what might be wrong with you for liking it.’ There was then a tense pause. ‘My sexuality. You’re not curious?’

‘Sure I am.’ I took a deep breath. ‘Okay: Teresa, are you really a man?’

Teresa looked me right in the eyes. ‘Not anymore.’ Bang. Like being hit over the head.

She then inched her left hand over and pulled her plunging neckline down a couple of plunges. ‘Like I said, these breasts are real. I had to undergo treatment to grow them, but they are real, they are all Teresa. And Teresa, née David, is now a woman.’

‘Do you ... Uhhm, what’s the state of your plumbing?’

‘Complex. But the main thing is, I don’t have a penis. I lost that.’

‘Are you a ...’

‘Full woman down there? Well, I have a vagina. A functioning vagina.’ She then drew a long, sad breath. ‘And with that, I think I’ve just signalled an end to our pleasant conversation this evening. I think I have told you more than I should have told you.’ She took her wine glass and rapidly drained the last third. She had the saddest look on her face.

For a moment, I didn’t know how to respond, so I just sat there, gazing at her like a fool. ‘And you don’t have to apologise, Raymond. Or make up some lame excuse. Just tell me that you enjoyed our little intimate chat, but you can’t go any further with a woman who grew up a man.’

She sat there, staring off into the corner with a defeated expression. A few moments later, she turned back, managed a loser’s smile, then blew me an air kiss, slid off the seat and turned away.

‘No, wait,’ I called out. ‘I’m not turned off by you. In fact, I’m ... I find you even more enticing now that I know the truth.’ *In vino veritas* was in full force here.

‘Really?’

‘Really.’

I didn’t tell her, as I should have, that I had long nurtured this fantasy of being with a transsexual. The whole idea of being inside a woman who had once been a man was really a major turn-on. I wanted to know what it was like. In some ways, Teresa was playing right into the core of one of my kinkiest fantasies.

Our conversation then took a sharp turn to the more intimate and more friendly. We each had a half a glass more wine and then decided to take our little party for two to cosier surroundings. I was willing to take her back to my place, but was very glad when she suggested we go to her apartment

instead. I was incredibly excited, more than I'd been in a long time. Hell, the moment we stepped out of the club, I was hailing a taxi I spied two streets away.

We held each other tightly in the cab and about halfway back to her place starting kissing rather passionately. I was hoping that the cabbie didn't get a good look at her, but was willing to tell him to go to hell and mind his own business even if he did. I had taken this big step and wasn't going to turn around now.

Back at her place, she offered me another drink, but I decided I didn't need any more alcohol at that point, so just asked for a large glass of water. While I was drinking, Teresa said she wanted to step into the other room for just a few minutes.

When she emerged again, she was wearing a kimono. 'It's genuine, from Kobe. An old boyfriend bought it for me.'

'Oh, that was nice of the old boyfriend.'

'And when I say old, I mean old; he had at least 25 years on me, this guy. But he was so sweet and so intelligent. He was a financial analyst, but we liked to discuss literature together. He was incredibly well-read. I really liked him.'

Back at the bar, Teresa had told me that she was a Lit major at university; NUS, in fact. I never cared all that much for literature, so I quickly steered the discussion off in another direction.

We ended up talking about the standard things, starting with where we grew up, where we went to school, all that duty conversation stuff. But with Teresa, it somehow came out relevant and even interesting.

At one point in our conversation, Teresa loosened the cord on her kimono and opened it slightly. 'Do you know that for traditionalists, it is



considered very crass to wear anything under the kimono. Anything at all.'

I suddenly realized how wildly aroused I had become. 'I see. And are you a traditionalist? I wouldn't have thought so.'

'I am in some things. Very much so.' She smiled this very warm smile. It was almost unbearable. God, did I want to get close to her. 'In other ways, I'm not at all traditional.' Then that carefully poised smile again. 'I told you I was complex.'

At this point, in the half-light of the room, I also realized how beautiful Teresa was—in a complex way. Sure, I was attracted to her from almost the moment I saw her, but this was a special kind of beauty which you only see after some time.

From her looks, and also from a few clues she had dropped into the conversation, I determined that in addition to that Bohemian ancestor, she also enjoyed a mixed pedigree of Chinese, Malay and probably even a bit of Indian. Maybe some of the other ASEAN members as well. And it all came together in a strange symphony of stunning features.

We continued kicking around various subjects for maybe another half hour. During this time, she fiddled with the opening of the kimono, occasionally edging it open slowly, then pulling it back together. Finally, at one point, as if it were the most natural thing in the world to do, Teresa pulled the flaps apart, threw her head back like she was posing for a fashion shoot and let the kimono slip off to her sides.

Her beautifully sculpted breasts were tastefully displayed. I couldn't believe how perfect they looked, how ... real. I punched myself mentally. Of course, they were real, she said they were real. Just a little ... late in coming.

Even more interesting to me was that feature a bit south of the breasts. The pussy looked somewhat strange, but pussies can look strange. It also

looked real. One thing I noticed was that there wasn't a lot of fuzz covering it. It was almost as if she had shaved it and the hair hadn't fully grown back yet.

I think she read my thoughts, because just as I was thinking about this interesting feature, Teresa deftly moved her hand down there and started stroking slowly. I couldn't believe it. Until that moment, I was even wondering if I would get to realize my long-time fantasy that evening. Now it was clear: Teresa wanted me and, my god, did I want her.

After that we talked for another five minutes, though I cannot possibly remember what we talked about.

Suddenly, Teresa fixed me with those sexy, hazel eyes and jumped to the main topic. 'I think I want to share myself with you. Do you want to share yourself with me?' I'd never heard anyone describe sex that way, but it immediately seemed like the perfect approach to the subject. I nodded, as slowly and as ceremoniously as I could.

Within moments, Teresa had stood up, kimono still wide open, moved across the room and taken me by the hand. Without saying anything, just flashing a smile, she led me to another room. The door was closed, but I knew it wasn't the kitchen.

Then, right before we reached the room, she turned and asked me the weirdest question of the evening. 'Who's your favourite character from Greek mythology?'

'My favourite character ... ?'

'Yes. Who do you really like? Or really identify with.'

Greek mythology? All I could think about was that bang-up movie with Eric Bana and Brad Pitt-Bull. I saw it three times, once on DVD when I was really drunk. 'Umm ... I guess Hector. Or Achilles. One of those two. Depends on my mood really.'

She smiled. ‘Yes, they’re interesting too. Very manly.’ She then tossed her longish, full hair around vigorously, like a banner. ‘My favourite is Teiresias. Obviously.’

‘Oh yeah, of course. That’s what I would have guessed.’ I had no idea at that point who the fuck Teiresias was. But it didn’t really matter, because two seconds later, she took my head in her hands, pulled me towards her and started kissing me passionately.

Her tongue eased its way into my mouth, then started twisting slowly against my tongue. Then it started moving more intensely, desperately almost. It was as if there was something inside me, perhaps concealed, that Teresa needed to find, to recover and then take as much of that as she could before we broke our kiss.

As the kiss went on, I started feeling really strange. She slid her tongue out, grabbed the sides of my head—she was somewhat strong still—and looked me deep in the eyes.

‘Don’t resist. Just don’t resist it. Let your feelings come through and swirl you in any direction they’re moving. Be honest with your feelings. Please.’ She then closed her eyes and we started kissing again. But even more intensely now. It was incredible.

She moved her hand down to the front of my pants and started rubbing. I was already standing tall and proud, as hard as I could possibly be. She stroked me expertly with a skilful palm. I imagined that she must have been a great masturbator back when she was still a guy.

Abruptly, she broke the kiss, put her mouth against my throat and whispered. ‘Let’s go inside. I can’t wait any longer.’

‘I can’t wait any longer, too,’ I replied—which was pretty obvious at that point.

Without turning from me, Teresa reached back and opened the door. She flipped on a low-glow light and stepped to the bed. The kimono slid to the floor. With her back still towards me, she raised her head and moved it gently. She also twisted her torso slightly as if to show off all the contours of her naked back and rump. She then arched one foot upwards to flaunt her shapely legs. I was pulling wildly at my clothes to get them off when she finally turned her head. 'Hurry with that. You want some help? I can't wait to feel you inside me.'

'No, I can handle it. I'm almost there.' I pulled my pants off roughly and tore off my underpants. She was now lying back on the bed, her left knee arched upwards, legs spread, eyes focused on the ceiling as if there was some message, some instructions there. Or some warning.

Finally naked, I climbed onto the bed, pulled myself against Teresa's naked body and started kissing her. It was again that intense, deep penetration kiss. I had my right leg arched over her legs and she immediately started stroking it with her left hand. She then slowly ran her fingertips up the leg until she hit the fork in the road, applying just enough pressure with her nicely clipped nails to make it painfully sensuous.

I rolled back over slightly and started stroking her pussy, first with tightly drawn fingers, then with just two fingers stroking the gash. Then I slowly inserted the middle finger, making a circular motion as it moved deeper into her. She gave out a gasp. 'Oh god; that's so nice.' I twirled a little more and then, strangely, she grabbed my wrist sharply and pulled my hand away.

'I want to come with you inside me. Also, you shouldn't do that too long or it will go dry. See, I have to use a lubricant. Natural wetness is the one thing the operation couldn't provide.'

She then grabbed my sides gently and helped ease me onto her eager

body. I suddenly spooked, like a young horse, and was afraid I might go soft. The finger was one thing, but here I was about to enter a woman who'd spent most of her life as a man. That was still bothering me somewhere deep inside.

But I was very close already, so Teresa eased me down, then took my rigid penis, pulled it against the lip of her vagina and twirled it around on the hair and the wet entrance, then started pulling me into her.

After she had taken in the crown of my cock, I did the rest, with a slow, easy push all the way in. Then I suddenly said to myself, 'This is it. You are inside a woman who nature had intended to be a man.' What might happen in here??

At first the pussy felt funny, like something that didn't belong there. I wanted to pull out, apologise, wipe myself off, apologise again, dress as quickly as I could and run out of there. But I knew I wouldn't. After a few strokes, I felt much more comfortable. And before long, it became very pleasurable. Teresa's vagina was very tight and though not as deep as I would have liked, it fitted me nicely.

In fact, I thought I was about to come after less than a minute; that's how good the pussy was. I closed my eyes and stiffened up my lower parts. Teresa slowed down her own stroking to a near halt. 'You almost came, didn't you?'

'Yes, but—'

'Don't worry, darling; that often happens. Most of the guys I've known, they lose control quickly with my vagina. So let's just relax, take it slow, and get used to the feel of the pussy.'

Which is exactly what I was trying to do. After another minute or so of soft thrust and pull, I felt more used to the sensation. Then we steadily picked up tempo and force, moving with an intensity I'd only known with a few women.

As we moved, Teresa started thrusting energetically. She suddenly called out, 'I love it, I love it. Oh, I really love it. You feel so right. This is what I want; you.'

'You're what I want too. You feel so right.' We were now going full throttle. Teresa's pumping under me was, not surprisingly, unique. It was as if she was trying to regain some lost and essential part of herself in the act of sex. Though I was trying to constrain myself as much as I could, I came more quickly than was usual for me. As she was still going, I kept pumping as long as I could, but finally, I slumped against her, thoroughly exhausted. I was sucking in short, shallow breaths and the air in the room had this wonderful sour taste to it.

For the next I'm-not-sure-how-many minutes we lay there, holding each other, mumbling words. I asked her if she enjoyed it, what it was like, if she came. She answered 'yes, definitely yes' to all three. I wanted details, but thought I should let the whole thing simmer for awhile before I started trawling for them.

About ten minutes later, we started kissing again, first just affectionately, then passionately. I was getting hard again after about thirty seconds of this. I started to climb aboard, but she pushed me back and said she had to go to the loo first, to urinate and then to re-lubricate. Before she climbed out of bed, she took my head in her hands and gave me a soft, very loving kiss. I may have been wrong because of the dim light, but I thought I detected a sadness in her face as she moved away.

As I waited for her to come back, I tended to the maintenance of my erection. I wanted to make sure it was ready for action upon her return, but that return was delayed ... and delayed. It wasn't too long, I suspect, before I slid into a deep sleep, probably a combination of the wine, the excitement

and the exhaustion of our love-making.

\* \* \*

I woke up in the early shafts of morning light, all alone in the bed. I hauled myself up to a sitting position and noted the slight headache pushing against my temples and forehead. I somehow found my shorts behind a chair, pulled them on and headed out to the living room.

Teresa was there on the long, plush couch, apparently asleep. She had a bath towel wrapped loosely around her waist, a long pink T-shirt pulled over her torso, and was wearing those sort of black blindfold things people wear on planes when they're trying to catch some sleep. I walked over to her quietly and touched her left shoulder lightly.

'Is that you?'

'Were you expecting anyone else?' She smiled at this.

'What time is it?'

'Early.'

'That must be why I'm still so tired.'

'May also have something to do with the exercise we managed to sneak in.'

'Maybe.' She took a deep sigh. 'So, Raymond ... or should I call you Hector?'

'Whatever suits you.'

'Was it everything you thought it would be?'

I didn't really know how to answer that, but rather than allowing myself to be choked by silence, I said it was even better than I ever thought. I then sucked back my lips before admitting, 'It was one of the most fantastic sexual

experiences I've ever had.'

'Good. That's what I was hoping I could give you.'

I looked down at that beautiful face and thought I saw tears trickling down from just under the blindfold.

'Teresa, is there something wrong?'

'No, no; everything's just right. Look, there are a couple of things I have to do. I really have to do them before too late, and I need solitude to do them in. I don't mean to be brusque or impolite, but ...'

'No, no, of course. I understand. You've got things that have to be done.'

'Thank you.'

She sat up from the couch for the first time, pointed to the coffee table next to the couch and asked me to get her the pad of paper sitting there. I did. She tore the top sheet off and handed it to me. 'This is my phone number. Give me a call. I'll be sort of busy for the next few days, but I'll be very free after that.'

'Okay.'

She then slid back into her recumbent position on the couch. I grabbed the last of my things that were lying around and got ready to leave. Suddenly, she spoke again.

'Let me ask you: do you really have any idea who Teiresias was?'

I laughed. 'Not a clue.'

She gave a chugging laugh. 'Teiresias was this guy in Greek mythology who had a good position; a top assistant to one of the gods. Anyone, one day he was walking along, saw these two snakes copulating, thrashed them with his walking stick, and was turned into a woman as a "punishment".'

'Ooo.'

'Then, one day, Zeus and Hera—the king and queen of the gods?—they



had this argument about who gets more pleasure in sex, a man or a woman. So they asked Teiresias, because she knew both sides. Teiresias was certain: woman have much more pleasure in sex.'

'I see. And would you agree with that?'

'Who am I to argue with my role model?' I laughed at that one.

We exchanged a few more rounds of banter, and then I had to go. She asked me to kiss her goodbye, which I did even though she remained lying on the couch with her blindfold on. I tried to lift it off for this last kiss, but she resisted strongly. 'I don't have to see you. I still see you, see you the way you were when we were one. That's the best view, believe me.' I relented.

I smoothened out the blindfold and leaned into her lightly. It was a warm and gentle kiss, one that promised future meetings.

\* \* \*

But I never saw her again. For the next few days, I kept calling and getting a message to leave a message. I left about two dozen of them, some of the later ones rather angry or pitifully desperate. After the third day, when I called, I was told the number was no longer in operation.

I then drove out to where she lived. Because it was a condo, I couldn't get past the guards. I tried to explain that I needed to see Teresa, to clarify something, but these guys weren't very helpful. Well, to be fair, I wasn't even sure of her apartment number or the building she was in. I thought I knew, but the guards, of course, wouldn't let me go in and wander around to check.

I tried to describe her, but what could I say—that I was looking for a beautiful woman who used to be a man named David? I didn't even know her last name. For that matter, was Teresa itself her real name? Was there

*anything* about this person that was one hundred percent real?

I went to the club where he had met, went quite a few times in fact, but she never came back. At least not on the evenings I was there. It was as if she'd just disappeared.

\* \* \*

Well, she did warn me more than once that evening that she was complex. I guess I should always be grateful to her for letting me see that I myself was more complex than I'd ever imagined. In some ways, it was the most unforgettable night of my life. In other ways, it was a night I will probably spend the rest of my life trying to forget.

**About the author:**

Alaric Leong is a proud Singaporean and aspiring author. Having worked as a PR writer, he decided to gravitate into a brand of fiction that hews a little more closely to reality. Another of his first attempts at fiction has been included in the anthology, *Crime Scene: Singapore* (Singapore: Monsoon Books, 2010).

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